UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

ACC

Administrative Committee on Coordination

ACC/1997/1
6 May 1997

ENGLISH ONLY

REPORT OF THE NINTH MEETING OF THE INTER-AGENCY COMMITTEE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

(United Nations Headquarters, New York, 20 and 21 February 1997)

CONTENTS

	Paragraphs	Page
INTRODUCTION	1	3
I. MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON COORDINATION	2 - 22	3
A. Follow-up to the outcome of meetings of ACC and other intergovernmental bodies	2 - 10	3
B. Review of preparations for the special session of the General Assembly to review the implementation of Agenda 21	11 - 16	5
C. Proposed agenda, dates and venue for the tenth meeting of the Committee	17	6
D. Report of the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources on its seventeenth session	18 - 19	6
E. Report of the ACC Subcommittee on Oceans and Coastal Areas on its fifth session	20 - 22	6
II. WORK OF IACSD	23 - 46	7
A. Streamlining of national reporting	23 - 26	7
B. Reports of subsidiary bodies reporting to IACSD	27 - 42	9
C. Other matters	43 - 46	12

CONTENTS (continued)

Page

Annexes

I. Agenda 14

II. List of participants 15

III. List of documents 17

IV. Provisional agenda for the tenth meeting of IACSD 18

V. Draft statement by the Administrative Committee on Coordination to the General Assembly at its special session 19

INTRODUCTION

1. The Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development (IACSD) held its ninth meeting in New York on 20 and 21 February 1997. The agenda for the session, as adopted by the Committee, is contained in annex I, the list of participants in annex II and the list of documents in annex III.

I. MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON COORDINATION

A. Follow-up to the outcome of meetings of ACC and other intergovernmental bodies

1. ACC

2. The Committee, in its consideration of the follow-up to the outcome of the meetings of ACC, noted the request of ACC at its second regular session of 1996 to IACSD to pursue the review of its subsidiary structure with a view to its further streamlining. In view of the close links of that issue with agenda item 5 (Reports of subsidiary bodies reporting to IACSD), it was decided to consider that aspect of item 2 (a) when considering agenda item 5.

3. The Committee also considered the issue of the linkage between the work of the ACC task forces on the coordinated follow-up to conferences and IACSD. It was reported that two of the task forces were close to completing their work, the Task Force on Basic Social Services for All, and the Task Force on Employment and Sustainable Livelihoods; the third, the Task Force on the Enabling Environment for Economic and Social Development, was scheduled to hold its final meeting in June 1997.

4. In the absence of detailed information on the progress achieved in the work of the three task forces, however, the Committee was unable to have a detailed discussion on the issue. It nevertheless reiterated the need for closer substantive links between the ACC task forces and IACSD. The Committee underlined the need to emphasize the role of IACSD vis-à-vis the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions and the task forces in the ACC statement to the special session of the General Assembly to review the implementation of Agenda 21. It also agreed that the text of the ACC statement should be provided to the Task Force on the Enabling Environment, through its Chairman, to enable it to consider the views contained therein in the preparation of its final report. The Committee recognized that it would not be possible to follow a similar approach with respect to the two other task forces since they were scheduled to complete their work before the issuance of the ACC statement.

2. Intergovernmental bodies

5. The representative of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) briefed the Committee on the outcome of the nineteenth session of the UNEP

Governing Council, held at Nairobi from 26 January to 7 February 1997. He underlined the crucial importance for UNEP of that session of the Council, and indicated that discussions had focused on a number of future challenges for UNEP, including the reformulation of a clear definition of its future role and functioning. This was reflected in the Nairobi Declaration, a strong statement confirming the role and mandate of UNEP, which was adopted by the ministers and heads of delegations attending the high-level segment of the Council and would be before the General Assembly at the special session (A/S-19/5, annex).

6. He also informed IACSD that the Governing Council had reached agreement on several programme initiatives, including the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities; further development of international environmental law; environmental monitoring, assessment and early warning (global environment outlook); development of an international chemical agenda; and the development of a legally binding instrument on prior informed consent and legal action to reduce persistent organic pollutants.

7. The Governing Council had also agreed on the programme budget for the current and next bienniums, requesting at the same time that the Executive Director explore ways and means to secure adequate and more predictable funding in the future. The debate on the question of governance, including the proposed establishment of an inter-sessional body to provide programmatic guidance to the Executive Director, had not been completed, and the President of the Council had decided to suspend the meeting until the question was resolved. Immediately after the adjournment of the session, UNEP had undertaken consultations with members of the Council and the Committee of the Permanent Representatives based at Nairobi in order to resolve the issue. The representative of UNEP expressed optimism that there would be an early resolution to the issue.

8. Several members of IACSD expressed the hope that the situation would be resolved soon, and considered that the outcome of the nineteenth session of the Governing Council, particularly in terms of the substantive decisions taken and the political support for UNEP among delegations, boded well for the future of UNEP.

9. IACSD was also briefed by the representative of the World Health Organization (WHO) on the recently held second meeting of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS). He reported that in different areas related to chemical safety, the level of achievement was most encouraging. In the areas of chemical risk assessment, harmonization and classification of labelling of chemicals, and chemical risk reduction, work was progressing well and responding to most of the previously established targets. The Forum had prepared a report and had made specific recommendations regarding chapter 19 of Agenda 21, which were to be presented by Canada, the host of the second meeting of IFCS, to the Commission on Sustainable Development and the special session of the General Assembly. The new international mechanism for coordination between international and national intergovernmental organizations - the Inter-organizational Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals, established in 1995 - had become an important instrument for IFCS.

10. The Committee was also provided with a briefing by the representative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees on developments within her organization since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) on the question of refugees and the environment.

B. Review of preparations for the special session of the General Assembly to review the implementation of Agenda 21

1. Matters related to documentation and the participation of agencies in the special session, including special events

11. IACSD was briefed on the organizational arrangements for the forthcoming meeting of the Ad Hoc Inter-sessional Working Group of the Commission on Sustainable Development, the fifth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development and the special session of the General Assembly to review the implementation of Agenda 21, including the anticipated arrangements for the involvement of the organizations and bodies of the United Nations system in those meetings.

12. Regarding the meeting of the Ad Hoc Group and the fifth session of the Commission, it was agreed that representatives of United Nations system organizations or bodies would be available during those meetings in their resource capacity to provide advice and assistance to the preparatory process. It was felt that the possible interventions from United Nations organizations or bodies during the debates in the meeting of the Commission should focus on key policy issues relevant to specific matters under consideration, rather than merely provide information on the activities that individual organizations had carried out since UNCED.

13. Since the rules of procedure during the special session of the General Assembly provided only a limited opportunity for United Nations agencies' involvement in its formal deliberations, the Committee was informed that the President of the General Assembly intended to allow a limited number of statements from United Nations bodies on the basis of the following criteria: (a) that the organization or body was either a task manager for one of the chapters of Agenda 21 or one of the international financial institutions of the United Nations system; (b) that the statements would be delivered at the level of the executive head of the particular organization or body.

14. Other opportunities for the involvement of the organizations and bodies of the United Nations system in the special session would include participation, including making interventions, in the work of the Committee of the Whole, and the organization of side events. The Committee noted the preference of the President of the General Assembly that all side events take place either during the lunch breaks of the special session or at the end of the day's meeting in order to avoid conflicts with official meetings of the special session.

15. The Committee also agreed that United Nations organizations or bodies which planned to be represented at the level of executive heads or planned to organize side events during the special session should inform the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development of the United Nations Secretariat as

soon as possible so that such proposals could be brought to the attention of the President of the General Assembly and scheduled, as appropriate. In the case of the organization of exhibitions on the United Nations premises, organizations or bodies were requested to inform the Department of Public Information of the United Nations Secretariat, which chaired the United Nations Exhibitions Committee, directly, since that Committee possessed the formal authority for approving such requests. Furthermore, IACSD noted that in accordance with existing policy, all additional costs related to the organization of side events would need to be covered by the respective organizations or bodies.

2. Consideration of the draft ACC statement to the 1997 special session of the General Assembly

16. IACSD wishes to bring the attention of ACC to the draft ACC statement to the 1997 special session of the General Assembly, which was finalized at the current meeting of the Committee and is contained in annex V. In accordance with the request of ACC, the draft was formally submitted to ACC members by correspondence to enable it to be issued in good time before the fifth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, thereby facilitating its greater impact.

C. Proposed agenda, dates and venue for the tenth meeting of the Committee

17. It was agreed that IACSD would hold its next meeting at Geneva at the headquarters of WHO for two to three days during the week of 15 September 1997. The provisional agenda is contained in annex IV.

D. Report of the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources on its seventeenth session

18. In considering the report of the Subcommittee on Water Resources, IACSD reviewed its functioning. There was general agreement that the Subcommittee was functioning well in pursuing the objectives outlined in its terms of reference, and had proved to be an effective mechanism for inter-agency collaboration in monitoring the implementation of chapter 18 of Agenda 21.

19. The Committee also approved the holding of the eighteenth session of the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources at the headquarters of the International Atomic and Energy Agency at Vienna from 1 to 3 October 1997.

E. Report of the ACC Subcommittee on Oceans and Coastal Areas on its fifth session, World Bank headquarters, Washington, D.C., 7 to 10 January 1997

20. In considering the report of the Subcommittee, IACSD reviewed its functioning. There was also general agreement that the Subcommittee was functioning well in pursuing the objectives outlined in its terms of reference.

The members of IACSD considered that the Subcommittee had proved to be an effective mechanism for inter-agency collaboration in monitoring the implementation of chapter 17 of Agenda 21, particularly in the preparation of the review and appraisal reports to the General Assembly. The Committee agreed to amend the terms of reference of the Subcommittee to reflect its performance in its additional capacity as the Steering Committee on Technical Cooperation and Assistance for the Global Programme of Action, as invited by the Governing Council of UNEP at its nineteenth session. It was noted that the Subcommittee would undertake that function in collaboration with the Subcommittee on Water Resources. The Committee thus concluded that the current arrangements for the functioning of the Subcommittee should remain in place.

21. The Committee approved the proposed timing for the sixth session of the ACC Subcommittee on Oceans and Coastal Areas during the week of 19 January 1998. IACSD noted the proposal of the Subcommittee for its meeting to be held preferably at Lisbon in view of the launching of the 1998 International Year of the Ocean and Expo '98, and cautioned that the logistical implications of the convening of the meeting of the Subcommittee away from the main or subregional headquarters of one of the United Nations agencies or organizations should be addressed by the Subcommittee in making a final recommendation to IACSD.

22. IACSD also endorsed the unanimous recommendation of the Subcommittee that Mr. I. Steiner (United Nations) be appointed Vice-Chairman.

II. WORK OF IACSD

A. Streamlining of national reporting

23. The Committee considered the background paper prepared by the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development of the United Nations Secretariat, which contained a number of proposals for the streamlining of national reporting and had been prepared on the basis of inter-agency consultations. The paper was prepared in response to the request of the Commission on Sustainable Development, at its fourth session, that the Secretary-General, in cooperation with interested States, provide the Commission at its fifth session with proposals for streamlining national reporting in the field of sustainable development, in which the country profiles could be the initial step towards streamlining reporting requirements, and also in response to recommendations made by IACSD at its eighth meeting, in July 1996.

24. It was stressed that the objective was to agree on a common approach to streamlining and a division of labour among the various organizations of the system requesting reports. Furthermore, the focus was on the streamlining of reporting processes (that is, on requests for information made to Governments) and not on the products of those requests.

25. After reviewing the proposals contained in the background paper, IACSD agreed on the following:

(a) That all relevant organizations in the United Nations system and secretariats of relevant conventions should participate in the process of streamlining national reporting;

(b) That official information from Governments of relevance to Agenda 21 would be shared in such a manner that Governments would not be requested to provide the same information to more than one United Nations organization or convention secretariat;

(c) That information mandated by legally binding instruments, as well as by decisions and resolutions of intergovernmental bodies, would continue to be provided to the respective convention secretariats, and that other United Nations system organizations and bodies that requested national information would continue to do so. In both cases, the respective secretariats would make that information available, as appropriate for Agenda 21, to the secretariat of the Commission on Sustainable Development for inclusion in future updated country profiles. Without prejudice to future decisions of the Commission, countries would not be requested to provide this information separately to the Commission unless they had not reported it previously (e.g., where reports were requested by a convention, but a country was not a party to that convention). It was also agreed that, at all times, Governments would have the discretion to report additionally to the Commission or to any other body, particularly where they found the process of reporting beneficial to their own strategic planning and participatory decision-making;

(d) That organizations and bodies that had not yet done so would move towards making their information available electronically, on a country-by-country basis, in a manner that would facilitate electronic linkages among the organizations and bodies of the United Nations system and the secretariats of the conventions. In the meantime, information that was not yet available electronically would similarly be shared to further the streamlining exercise;

(e) That the country profiles being prepared by the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development on behalf of the Commission on Sustainable Development should serve as a basis for streamlined socio-economic information of relevance to sustainable development, in full cooperation with the Statistics Division of the United Nations Secretariat, by linking with the relevant databases of the United Nations system;

(f) That a reporting calendar would provide a useful informational and planning tool for national Governments, and should therefore be pursued;

(g) That the streamlining process be linked to the parallel exercise of common access to United Nations system databases and a sustainable development Web site, which were also being undertaken through IACSD at the request of the Commission;

(h) That consultations be undertaken within the system of resident representatives, both with regard to strengthening support to capacity-building provided at the country level for the preparations of national reports, and for dovetailing the streamlining process with the information that was provided for country strategy notes;

(i) That a longer-term approach and work plan be developed which would include, inter alia, consultations with organizations and bodies of the United Nations system on modalities for accessing their data; further consideration of core data sets related to sustainable development; preparation of a manual on sustainable development reporting; working towards the establishment of country-owned Web sites for sustainable development, on the understanding that there were many countries which required capacity-building assistance in order to be able to develop and maintain those Web sites; and the facilitation of support to capacity-building at the national level, both for the preparation of national reports and for providing those reports in an electronic format convenient to the country concerned.

26. The meeting also agreed that streamlining would begin in a limited manner, as outlined above, but could broaden over time to include data other than mandated national reports if that appeared to be both desirable and feasible. Issues of confidentiality of information would also be considered.

B. Reports of subsidiary bodies reporting to IACSD

1. Report of the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources on its seventeenth session

27. The Secretary of the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources introduced the report of the Subcommittee on its seventeenth session (ACC/1996/19). He acknowledged the important contribution of the members of the Subcommittee in the preparation of the comprehensive assessment of global freshwater resources, and drew the attention of the Committee to the four major issues dealt with in the report, namely the urgent problem of the continued degradation of water quality around the world, the protection of the marine environment and coastal areas from land-based activities, the need to establish a database containing information on the activities of member agencies, and the Global Water Partnership (GWP). He informed IACSD that the Subcommittee supported a proposal for the development of a comprehensive water quality programme, representing a cooperative effort of five United Nations bodies (the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), UNEP, the United Nations University, the Department for Development Support and Management Services of the United Nations Secretariat and WHO), based on a carefully selected global network of representative drainage basins which encompass the broad spectrum of environments, so that future extrapolation to unmonitored basins could be achieved.

28. With regard to the issue of the protection of the marine environment, there was a need for deriving greater synergies from closer cooperation between the subcommittees on water and on oceans and coastal areas. The members of the Subcommittee decided that the Chairman of the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources would contact his counterpart on the ACC Subcommittee on Oceans and Coastal Areas prior to its next meeting, regarding cooperation in support of implementation of the Programme of Action.

29. On the question of the database, it was decided that it should begin with describing the United Nations field-level activities, with an initial focus on

sub-Saharan Africa, and later be developed to include information on global, regional and local activities. A task force, comprising the representatives of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund, the World Bank, the Department for Development Support and Management Services, UNESCO, UNEP and the Economic Commission for Africa, was formed to consider the issue and make recommendations on the scope and content of the database and on an implementation schedule. It was noted that the first draft of a proposed database structure had already been distributed by UNDP.

30. The Committee was informed that GWP had been officially launched at Stockholm in August 1996, and represented an international mechanism aiming to translate the consensus on water management into responsive, coherent services to developing countries, emphasizing local implementation.

31. Finally, the Secretary of the Subcommittee also noted the successful observation of the 1996 World Water Day, and described plans for the next one in 1997.

32. Members of IACSD supported the idea of establishing a database, including the monitoring of specific river basins, an integrated research and training programme to develop the appropriate water quality models to address the needs of water supply, water and health, and the broader objective of improving the condition of the environment. The Committee recognized that sustainable water resources management was a crucial emerging priority, and supported proposals for establishing programmes to monitor and improve water quality, with a possible link to river-based programmes, control of land-based pollution and protection of coastal waters. There was also broad support for linking the improvement of water supply and sanitation with health issues, given that the message on that crucial interrelationship was not always conveyed successfully. It was also agreed that the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) should participate in the joint programme to improve water quality.

33. Members of IACSD agreed on the need for improving links with organizations and bodies outside of the United Nations system, and supported ongoing regular dialogue and interaction in that area, without imposing any rigid structural arrangements. It was felt, however, that the greatest benefits of that approach could only be achieved if there was first some coordination among the many different water-related institutions and programmes. The Committee supported the proposal for the Subcommittee to hold an informal meeting with non-governmental organizations in conjunction with the next session of the Subcommittee.

34. Finally, members of IACSD stressed the importance of the human dimension of the water supply and sanitation problem, which should be also addressed, noting that a solution to the problem of expanded coverage would require the support of urban and rural development strategies to generate local income in order to finance the maintenance of new or improved infrastructure and services.

35. IACSD also approved the dates and venue of the eighteenth session of the Subcommittee, to be held at the headquarters of the International Atomic Energy Agency at Vienna from 1 to 3 October 1997, to be preceded by the meeting of the Inter-Agency Committee on Water Supply and Sanitation.

36. It was also agreed that the Chairman of the Subcommittee should represent the Subcommittee at the meetings of the Interim Committee of the Global Water Partnership. IACSD also welcomed the participation in the Interim Committee of the Chief of the Water Resources Development and Management Service of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

2. Report of the ACC Subcommittee on Oceans and Coastal Areas on its fifth session

37. The report of the ACC Subcommittee on Oceans and Coastal Areas on its fifth session (ACC/1997/3), which was held at World Bank headquarters, Washington, D.C., from 7 to 10 January 1997, was introduced by the Subcommittee's Chairperson from UNEP. She briefly summarized the major conclusions and recommendations agreed by the Subcommittee, including proposals for its future programme of work. The Committee was also informed of the decision of the UNEP Governing Council inviting the Subcommittee to perform, in collaboration with the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources, the functions of a steering committee on technical cooperation and assistance for the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine-Environment from Land-based Activities, including activities related to the clearing house, with representation from regional and international organizations which have primary roles and responsibilities for its implementation.

38. The Chairperson pointed out that, if endorsed by the IACSD and ACC, the new reporting responsibilities associated with the Programme of Action would be in addition to future reporting obligations of the Subcommittee with respect to its functions as task manager for chapter 17 of Agenda 21, as well as those related to undertaking periodic overall reviews of all aspects of the marine environment and its related issues, as proposed by the Commission on Sustainable Development at its fourth session. The Subcommittee welcomed this decision, as well as General Assembly resolution 51/34, in which the Assembly had called for an annual review and evaluation by the Assembly of developments relating to ocean affairs and the law of the sea, beginning at its fifty-second session. The Chairperson also drew to the attention of IACSD the concern felt by the Subcommittee that the Secretary-General's proposal for the Commission to carry out an in-depth review of oceans and seas in 1999 might be more appropriately timed to coincide with the International Year of the Ocean in 1998. She furthermore reiterated the Subcommittee's previous recommendation to IACSD at its eighth session that it might be more efficient for the Subcommittee to report directly to ACC in future.

39. Additional priority areas for the Subcommittee's work include its preparations for celebrating the 1998 International Year of the Ocean with a number of joint activities and the World Exposition in 1998 devoted to oceans (Expo '98). The Subcommittee has initiated work to prepare a pilot phase of a United Nations atlas of the oceans for Expo '98, which will be available in digital form, on CD-ROM and on the Internet. The Chairperson also referred to the ongoing work of the Joint Group of Experts on the Scientific Aspects of Marine Environmental Protection to prepare an assessment of the health of the oceans by 2002. As a first step in that assessment, the next periodic update on

coastal areas in regional seas, including relevant river systems, would be available in 1998.

40. Taking into account the need for regular consultations on the various aspects of its new work plan, including a strengthened collaboration with the Subcommittee on Water Resources, the Subcommittee was considering holding informal consultations with the Subcommittee on Water Resources in conjunction with an informal meeting of the Subcommittee on Oceans and Coastal Areas to be held from 6 to 8 August 1997 at Stockholm. The Subcommittee had already established close cooperation with the Subcommittee on Water Resources, including inviting its Chairman to participate in annual meetings. The Subcommittee suggested convening its sixth session during the week of 19 January 1998, preferably at Lisbon in connection with the launching of Expo '98.

41. Finally, the Subcommittee had unanimously recommended that Mr. Ismat Steiner, Director of the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea of the United Nations Secretariat, be named Vice-Chairman in place of Mr. Moritaka Hayashi, who had recently transferred from that post to assume new duties with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

42. The members of IACSD welcomed and endorsed the UNEP Governing Council s invitation to the Subcommittee on Oceans to act as the inter-agency steering committee for the Programme of Action. They expressed their strong support for using an existing coordination body that was seen to be effective rather than establishing a new mechanism, and they also appreciated the ongoing efforts by both the oceans and water subcommittees to further strengthen their collaboration. They welcomed, as an important initiative, the new work plan proposed by the Subcommittee, which went beyond information exchange and the preparation of reports for the Commission to focus on specific joint activities and substantive collaboration among agencies. It was also suggested that an item on system-wide preparations for the 1998 International Year of the Ocean should be added to the agenda of the next ACC and IACSD meetings, and that the Joint United Nations Information Committee should be invited to be involved. On the question of reporting arrangements, it was generally agreed that there was no need at the present time to recommend changing the Subcommittee's relationship as a subsidiary body of IACSD, although it was pointed out that the new assignment given to the Subcommittee in connection with the Programme of Action would require amending the Subcommittee's terms of reference.

C. Other matters

1. Coordination of the geoscience programmes of the United Nations system

43. In introducing the item, the representative of WMO explained the reasons that had led the Secretary-General of WMO to convene a group of eminent persons in their personal capacities to a meeting on the subject of the geoscience programmes in the United Nations system. He stated that WMO had taken the initiative following discussion at its Congress in 1995 concerning the need to streamline the work of WMO and enhance its effectiveness in that field. He

recalled that all organizations and bodies of the United Nations system involved in activities related to the geosciences had been informed about that meeting in October 1996; the report of the meeting was distributed to the members of IACSD.

44. Members of IACSD discussed the report and presented their views on it. They stressed the importance they attached to enhanced coordination and cooperation in that area among the United Nations system organizations and bodies concerned. They acknowledged the prerogative of the individual executive heads to take initiatives in their areas of competence and to seek outside expertise to advise on issues related to their particular programmes. They felt, however, that given the involvement of various United Nations organizations and bodies in several aspects of the issue, the meeting of eminent persons could have benefited from the views of the organizations concerned. In addition, they felt that although the report of the meeting contained a number of proposals, many of its recommendations required further discussion. With regard to those recommendations, the view was expressed that full advantage should always be taken of existing institutions and coordination mechanisms.

45. In view of the importance and complexity of the issues involved, IACSD agreed that it would review the matter at its forthcoming meeting, based on further information to be provided by WMO, and would prepare for ACC's consideration of the matter.

2. Other issues

Proposed global initiative for the protection and promotion of health and environment in border areas

46. The representative of WHO briefed the Committee on a proposed global initiative for the protection and promotion of health and environment in border areas, which are generally more prone to social, political, humanitarian, environmental and health problems, and are usually deficient in basic information and statistics. He considered that there was a need to recognize the complex problems affecting peoples living in these areas and bring their concerns to the attention of authorities worldwide, as recommended by the Global Advisory Committee on Health Research, which had recommended that WHO address those issues in collaboration with other organizations of the United Nations system. IACSD recognized that there was a need to alert authorities worldwide to the increasing threat to public health stemming from the neglect and underdevelopment of border areas and the communities that inhabit them, and a number of agencies indicated interest in such an initiative and in collaborating with WHO on the issue. IACSD therefore agreed to consider the issue for discussion at a future meeting, after the necessary consultations, under the leadership of WHO with other concerned organizations or bodies of the United Nations system, had been completed.

Annex I

AGENDA OF THE NINTH MEETING OF THE INTER-AGENCY COMMITTEE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

1. Adoption of the agenda and timetable.

2. Follow-up to the outcome of meetings of:

   (a) ACC;

   (b) Intergovernmental bodies.

3. Review of preparations for the special session of the General Assembly to review the implementation of Agenda 21:

   (a) Matters related to documentation and the participation of agencies in the Special Session, including special events;

   (b) Consideration of the draft ACC statement to the 1997 special session of the General Assembly.

4. Streamlining of national reporting.

5. Reports of subsidiary bodies reporting to IACSD:

   (a) Report of the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources on its seventeenth session;

   (b) Report of the ACC Subcommittee on Oceans and Coastal Areas on its fifth session.

6. Other matters:

   (a) Coordination of the geoscience programmes of the United Nations system;

   (b) Dates, venue and provisional agenda for the 10th meeting of IACSD;

   (c) Other issues: proposed global initiative for the protection and promotion of health and environment in border areas.

7. Adoption of the report.

Annex II

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Chairman: N. Desai (United Nations)

Secretary: C. Hackett (United Nations)

United Nations, its entities and programmes

Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development	J. Waller-Hunter P. Najlis A. Rogers A. Vasilyev H. Morita-Lou M. P. Silveira-Williams E. Matthews
Department for Development Support and Management Services	M. Brewster
Department for Economic and Social Information and Policy Analysis	P. Bartelmus R. Shah
Office of Legal Affairs	J. Escudero G. Göttsche
Department of Humanitarian Affairs	P. Boullé
United Nations Centre for Human Settlements	A. P. Celik
Economic Commission for Africa	A. Bahri
Regional Commissions New York Office	M. McCaffery
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development	G. Kell
United Nations Environment Programme	A. Amin W. Ponikiewski
United Nations Children's Fund	G. Ghosh Jingjing Qian
United Nations Development Programme	K. Jorgensen
United Nations Population Fund	H. Jemai
United Nations International Drug Control Programme	S. Bryant

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	F. Naylor

Specialized agencies and related organizations

International Labour Organization	D. Smith
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	F. H. Weibgen S. Nakouzi
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	G. Glaser
World Health Organization	W. Kreisel
World Bank	J. Martin-Brown
International Monetary Fund	J. B. Zulu H. Shugarman
World Meteorological Organization	S. Chacowry C. Don Nanjira
World Intellectual Property Organization	K. Suedi
United Nations Industrial Development Organization	M. Rigola

* * *

International Atomic Energy Agency	M. S. Opelz

* * *

Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity	T. Gross
Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Severe Drought and/or Desertification, particularly in Africa	S. Briceño
Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change	J. Pasztor

* * *

ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources	P. Najlis
ACC Subcommittee on Oceans and Coastal Areas	T. Melvasalo

Annex III

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

ACC/IACSD/IX/1997/CRP.1	Annotated provisional agenda
ACC/IACSD/IX/1997/CRP.2	Timetable
ACC/IACSD/IX/1997/CRP.3	Review of preparations for the special session of the General Assembly to review the implementation of Agenda 21: consideration of the draft ACC statement to the 1997 special session of the General Assembly, discussion paper prepared by the Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development of the United Nations Secretariat
ACC/IACSD/IX/1997/CRP.4 and Add.1	Streamlining of national reporting: paper prepared by the Department setting forth additional proposals for the streamlining of national reporting
ACC/IACSD/IX/1997/CRP.5	Reports of subsidiary bodies reporting to IACSD: report of the ACC Subcommittee on Water Resources on its seventeenth session, (UNESCO headquarters, Paris, 9-11 October 1996)
ACC/IACSD/IX/1997/CRP.6	Reports of subsidiary bodies reporting to IACSD: report of the ACC Subcommittee on Oceans and Coastal Areas on its fifth session (World Bank headquarters, Washington, D.C., 7-10 January 1997)
ACC/IACSD/IX/1997/CRP.7	Other matters: coordination of the geoscience programmes of the United Nations, WMO brochure on the geosciences and the United Nations system

Annex IV

PROVISIONAL AGENDA FOR THE TENTH MEETING OF THE
INTER-AGENCY COMMITTEE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

1. Adoption of the agenda and timetable.

2. Follow-up to the special session of the United Nations General Assembly to review the implementation of Agenda 21.

3. Coordination of geoscience programmes of the United Nations system.

4. Proposed global initiative for the protection and promotion of health and environment in border areas.

5. Reports of subsidiary bodies reporting to IACSD.

6. Other matters.

7. Adoption of the report.

Annex V

DRAFT STATEMENT BY THE ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE ON COORDINATION TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT ITS SPECIAL SESSION

1. Sustainable development remains one of the most important challenges facing humanity as it approaches the twenty-first century. Yet there is growing concern that failure to accelerate economic growth and development in vast areas of the world, to resolve burning social problems, to correct unsustainable production and consumption patterns and increasing inequity, and to halt deterioration of the environment will irreversibly limit national capacities to respond to future challenges.

2. It is the collective view of the executive heads of the organizations of the United Nations system participating in the Administrative Committee on Coordination that the concept of sustainable development provides an over-arching policy framework for the entire spectrum of United Nations system-wide activities at the global, regional and country levels. Sustainable development, as set out in Agenda 21, the action plan of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held at Rio de Janeiro, calls for the implementation of inter-related policies promoting economic development, improved social equity and environmental sustainability. As such, it requires a more integrated approach to policy development, involving new ways of thinking, new institutional mechanisms and new partnerships with a wide variety of governmental and non-governmental stakeholders.

3. A renewed system-wide effort is called for to address the implications of globalization and liberalization in the world economy, bearing in mind the major new opportunities being opened up for trade and investment and information and technology flows, but also the risks of marginalization of the poorest countries, and the poorest groups, especially women and children, within countries.

4. International commitments to achieving sustainable development have been strengthened by the outcomes of the series of major world development conferences held during the 1990s.[1] These meetings have focused attention on the social dimension of sustainable development, in particular the overwhelming priority of poverty alleviation. Widespread poverty is a core factor in perpetuating economic stagnation, social deprivation, ill health and environmental degradation. Other conferences have increased attention to the socio-economic aspects of sustainable development.[2]

5. Successful efforts have been made to sensitize public opinion and to mobilize international cooperation, as well as to adopt specific programmes to implement Agenda 21 and to establish relevant institutional mechanisms at the international, regional, national and local levels. However, much remains to be done to restore the momentum generated at the Rio Conference and fulfil the commitments made there. Greater political leadership is needed to forge global partnership to advance Agenda 21.

6. The Administrative Committee on Coordination is resolved to meet the major challenges involved in effective implementation of commitments made at the Rio Conference. Follow-up will require a high degree of policy integration and the Committee is intent on continuing its development of effective tools and techniques to improve system-wide coordination within the United Nations system. Major change and adaptation have already been undertaken in this regard to support effective implementation at the international and national levels.

7. The Administrative Committee on Coordination attaches the greatest importance to the improvement of field-level implementation of the Rio commitments, through a coordinated approach at the country level. It particularly supports the strengthening of inter-agency cooperation at the regional level, which has great potential for practical programme delivery. Enhanced cooperation will include regional organizations outside the United Nations system.

8. The Administrative Committee on Coordination is committed to the further enhancement of cooperation among organizations of the United Nations system and a wide variety of non-governmental stakeholders, including non-governmental organizations, major groups and other components of civil society. Linkages among functional responsibilities for information resources, policy development and operational programmes will be explored in the period following the 1997 review.

9. The Administrative Committee on Coordination believes that the task manager system of the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development has led to more effective use of resources and expertise within the United Nations system and is a promising improvement over previous efforts at inter-agency cooperation. However, the system has not yet reached its full potential in terms of defining policy linkages and the sharing of responsibilities to achieve full programme synergy. The Administrative Committee on Coordination will continue to strengthen inter-agency coordination with the aim of advancing more integrated and cost-efficient policy approaches. The Inter-Agency Committee will play an important role in this regard.

10. Coordination cannot be achieved at the secretariat level alone, however. The executive heads of the organizations of the United Nations system participating in the Administrative Committee on Coordination would welcome the development of clearer and more consistent intergovernmental and national level policies for sustainable development. Clear guidance at the international and national levels would greatly facilitate the efforts of United Nations agencies to carry out their mandates effectively, and reduce the possibility of dissipation of scarce financial resources.

11. An important constraint is the financial crisis affecting the United Nations and many of the specialized agencies, which leaves little room for expanded initiatives. The expectations of additional resources raised at Rio have not been fulfilled. As a result, many organizations are having difficulty in carrying out the important activities resulting from the Conference and responding to the additional work requirements of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

12. Experience gained since the Conference has led the Administrative Committee on Coordination to the firm belief that the time has come for a new approach to policy-making which stresses practical actions to achieve sustainable development. Intergovernmental policy discussions could usefully be reoriented to focus on a limited number of strategic priority issues, the emphasis being on linkages between resource management and the role of economic actors and major groups. Such an approach would stimulate greater attention to cross-cutting issues such as population, gender, health, impact on children, production and consumption patterns, and to means of implementation, in particular financing mechanisms and technology transfer, capacity-building and education.

Notes

[1] The World Summit for Children, the World Conference on Education for All, the World Conference on Human Rights, the International Conference on Population and Development, the World Summit for Social Development, the World Conference on Natural Disaster Reduction, the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, the Fourth World Conference on Women and the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements.

[2] The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (ninth session), the World Trade Organization Ministerial Meeting in Singapore and the World Food Summit.

APPENDIX

Sustainable development in the United Nations system:
an explanatory note

FROM CONCEPT TO ACTION

1. The commitments made at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and other conferences have presented a major challenge to the entire system of United Nations programmes and institutions. Effective implementation of Agenda 21 and other Rio agreements, as well as the need for coherent multidisciplinary support to intergovernmental processes in the area of sustainable development, particularly to the Commission on Sustainable Development, have had a significant effect on virtually all organizations and programmes of the United Nations system, both jointly - in particular through the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development - and individually. The Administrative Committee on Coordination believes that the challenge has generally been met with enthusiasm and a solid commitment by the United Nations system. The specialized agencies and the programmes have proved flexible enough to make structural, programme and budget changes to enable them to provide support for the implementation of Agenda 21.

2. However, a key difficulty faced by the United Nations system is that not all governing and policy-making bodies have the same understanding of the concept of sustainable development. In some cases, sustainability is equated with environmentally sound management of natural resources, to the neglect of broader social and economic issues. Improved policy coordination across various governing bodies within the United Nations system is essential to ensuring policy coherence, more effective joint programming, more efficient deployment of resources and the avoidance of duplication resulting from overlapping tasks which might be mandated to different secretariats by their governing bodies.

3. Sustainable development demands a qualitatively different approach to coordination at both policy-making and programme implementation levels. United Nations agencies and secretariats of conventions have had to develop new institutional arrangements which can facilitate intersectoral cooperation, and new programming techniques within and between organizations. Institutional innovation is also occurring in national aid agencies. Greater cooperation between bilateral and multilateral agencies would enhance and encourage the wider adoption of these approaches.

4. In addition, Member States should promote effective coordination at the level of intergovernmental decision-making. In the language of Agenda 21, the Commission on Sustainable Development is to "rationalize the intergovernmental decision-making capacity for the integration of environment and development issues". This mandate has not been fully realized. The Commission's role is political; it does not have decision-making authority with respect to other intergovernmental processes, but it can promote common policy approaches, geared to cross-sectoral issues, to advance sustainable development if relevant responses are ensured throughout the United Nations system.

CHALLENGES AHEAD

A new approach to international policy-making

5. Experience with policy development and implementation in the years since the Rio Conference has made clear the need for new approaches which stress the operational aspects of sustainable development. Intergovernmental dialogue on sustainable development could usefully be reorganized to consider a limited number of strategic priority issues, so as to develop a more focused approach to relevant activities in the United Nations system both at the international and at the regional and country levels. The Administrative Committee on Coordination supports the proposals concerning the work programme of the Commission on Sustainable Development after 1997 contained in the report of the Secretary-General on overall progress achieved since Rio.* The new work programme would subject a limited number of thematic areas to in-depth consideration, highlighting the linkages with relevant chapters of Agenda 21 and the role of relevant economic sectors and major groups. This approach would promote a new emphasis on cross-cutting issues such as production and consumption patterns, population, health, impacts on gender and children and means of implementation, including finance and technology transfer, capacity-building and education, which will be essential to the development of practical and integrated policies.

Operations at the regional level

6. Since the Conference new forms of inter-agency cooperation have emerged at the regional level. They include cooperation between the regional commissions and regional representatives of the global United Nations agencies and programmes. Examples are the adoption of the Regional Action Programme for Asia and the Pacific, the establishment by the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, in cooperation with United Nations Environment Programme and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, of the Joint Committee on Environment and Development in the Arab Region and the upcoming memorandum of understanding between the United Nations Children's Fund and the World Bank on collaboration in water supply, environment and sanitation in Africa. Moreover, regional organizations outside the United Nations system have taken an active role in some regions in preparing regional plans and programmes to follow up on United Nations conferences and other international programme activities, and implementation of conventions. However, achieving a better balance between work at the global level and work at the regional level will be essential for success in the next stage of Agenda 21 implementation. In those areas of sustainable development where regional approaches may prove to be most promising, possibilities for entrusting the United Nations regional commission with a more active coordination role should also be explored.

7. It is necessary to intensify regional implementation of the three Rio conventions, namely, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, particularly through undertaking initiatives aimed at linking activities and projects in the areas of drought and desertification, climate change, forests and biodiversity. Regional cooperation

is also vital in implementing related conventions and the commitments stemming from the series of global conferences organized by the United Nations since 1990, all of which have incorporated the fundamental principles and policy goals of Agenda 21. Regional cooperation will continue to be of great importance in implementing regional environmental agreements.

Operations at the national level

8. It is recognized that institutional cooperation at the national level should be based on country needs and requirements and an appropriate enabling context. Where national sustainable development strategies exist, and national institutional arrangements promote an integrated approach, this facilitates inter-agency cooperation and partnership. Progress in there areas, however, has been slow. Organizations with mainly analytical or normative roles and no country representation have no direct access at the country level and few means of interaction with potential partners.

9. Improved country-level coordination is needed not only among the international and regional organizations but also, in particular, among the donor programmes and activities, which are sometimes carried out in isolation from relevant inter-agency activities and national coordination mechanisms. Such coordination is needed both for the implementation of Agenda 21 initiatives, and for effective follow-up among focal points dealing with the major environmental, social and developmental conventions. Country strategy notes, which were proposed as a basis for country-level coordination, have not yet emerged as a mechanism that can ensure effective interorganizational cooperation, and the resident coordinator system has not yet realized its full potential and needs further strengthening and commitment by the system as a whole.

REVIEW OF INTER-AGENCY COORDINATION*

The Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development and its task manager system

10. Almost immediately after the Rio Conference, the Administrative Committee on Coordination, taking into account provisions of Agenda 21, decided on an institutional framework for promoting a coherent system-wide response to Conference follow-up requirements. That framework was built on an innovative model that combined central coordination functions, vested in the mandates of the Administrative Committee on Coordination and the newly established Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development, and decentralized allocation of specific responsibilities to relevant organizations of the United Nations system, based on their comparative strengths, to act as task managers for various programme components of Agenda 21.

---

* The Administrative Committee on Coordination undertook a review of the functioning of the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development as part of its preparations for the special session of the General Assembly. A summary of the results of the review exercise is given in this section of the statement.

11. As more experience has been gained in the implementation of Agenda 21 and in the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development, modalities for inter-agency collaboration have evolved considerably. The Inter-Agency Committee has gained in importance as an umbrella for coordination initiatives, which at the same time give full rein to numerous, more specialized inter-agency mechanisms. Experience shows that those mechanisms have worked best when taking a focused, thematic approach. That permits them to draw more deeply on each agency's expertise and resources and promotes detailed, technical collaboration related to data and information, policy and practice, or operational programmes. This has to be taken fully into account in future work, which includes improving the effectiveness of the Administrative Committee on Coordination's subcommittees on freshwater and on oceans and coastal areas; the latter subcommittee was called for by the Commission on Sustainable Development.

12. System-wide work aimed at further broadening and deepening existing inter-agency collaboration and coordination in follow-up to the Rio Conference has become an ongoing process in the United Nations system. It includes continuing consideration of measures aimed at improving the delivery capacity and coordination at the field level, enhancing policy coordination at the global, regional and country levels, better interaction between the Inter-Agency Committee and other bodies and mechanisms of the Administrative Committee on Coordination for inter-agency coordination, streamlining requests for reporting, and involvement of organizations outside the United Nations system, among others.

13. The task manager system should continue to promote greater interaction with other inter-agency arrangements, including those established to follow up other recent United Nations conferences. It has furthered outreach beyond the framework of the United Nations system, with a view to involving other relevant intergovernmental organizations and processes, as well as partners from major groups and the non-governmental organizations.

14. Task managers should continue to expand their efforts to involve major groups more widely in consultations regarding the preparation of reports for the Commission and implementation of sustainable development activities and, when appropriate, to invite experts from major groups to participate in inter-agency expert meetings.

15. In the view of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, these evolving arrangements have generally allowed the United Nations system to provide a flexible, collaborative and participatory mechanism to support the implementation of Agenda 21 and coordination of various sustainable development activities. Successful examples of system-wide collaboration, particularly at the programme/country levels, include the Interorganizational Programme on the Sound Management of Chemicals, established as an inter-agency partnership arrangement in support of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety; the informal Inter-Agency Task Force on Forests, established to respond to the needs of the Ad Hoc Intergovernmental Panel on Forests; and cooperation in the context of the Commission's programme on indicators for sustainable development. Several cooperative inter-agency programmes which preceded the Conference, particularly in the area of science, information and analysis, have now been

linked to the Inter-Agency Committee through its task manager system, such as the World Climate Programme.

16. The Administrative Committee on Coordination believes that the task manager system of the Inter-Agency Committee has generally led to more effective use of resources and expertise within the United Nations system and is a promising improvement over previous efforts at inter-agency cooperation and joint action. It has rationalized the preparation of reports for the Commission and facilitated contributions among organizations based on their specialized mandates. By encouraging systematic communication and information exchange, it has helped disseminate knowledge of means to promote sustainable development and reduced duplication of effort.

17. Nevertheless, it is the view of the Administrative Committee on Coordination that the task manager system has not yet realized its full potential in fostering coordination among all the agencies. The review of the functioning of the Inter-Agency Committee conducted by the Administrative Committee on Coordination led to the conclusion that a better balance is needed in coordination at global, regional and country/field levels. Cooperation remains underdeveloped at the regional level - although in some instances, such as in the region of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, agencies have been designated as coordinators for specific programme areas of the regional action programme.

18. Further specification of task manager roles will be necessary, to distinguish between ongoing data and information functions, for example, and cooperation at regional or national levels on programme delivery. Task managers should be encouraged to promote joint programming at the regional and subregional levels, and to foster a more integrated approach which incorporates the social and economic dimensions of sustainable development.

Resource issues

19. Inter-agency coordination entails both benefits and costs. Its goal is to combine the expert skills and financial resources of individual agencies so that policies, information resources, and operational programmes better integrate specific sustainable development concerns. Moreover, resources may be deployed more cost-effectively when agencies collaborate in a mutually reinforcing manner, or when they accept a division of labour which avoids programme duplication. Yet consultations and networking among specialists in different fields take time, and, in spite of the fact that modern communications technology can facilitate and expedite communications, face-to-face interactions remain essential in generating responsiveness and improving results. Meetings require staff time for preparing discussion papers and reports, as well as travel expenses.

20. The task manager system therefore has its costs. System-wide reporting responsibilities have placed a considerable strain on individual organizations, as they have been borne within existing human and financial resources. It has been difficult financially to keep up representation in the Commission, the Inter-Agency Committee and Agenda 21-related meetings and with those relevant to the agency's mandate. Further operationalization of new political agreements

reached at the intergovernmental level and moving towards joint programming would give rise to additional demands.

21. The financial crisis affecting the United Nations and many of the specialized agencies and programmes leaves little room for innovative and more cooperative initiatives by individual agencies or throughout the system. The expectations raised by the Rio Conference of an increase in available resources have not been met, while the activities that had to be carried out have expanded considerably. The organizations and agencies of the United Nations system are therefore hard-pressed to carry out both their original mandates and those stemming from the Conference and the work requirements of the Commission. At the same time, as changes in programmes and procedures yield appreciable improvements, they offer new opportunities and invite further commitments and requests on the part of Member States.

22. Joint programming, directly involving a limited number of the most concerned agencies, needs to be further fostered. Policy integration and the need for coordinated action are the central messages of Agenda 21. However, it is becoming urgently apparent that efforts to promote integrated approaches to coordination at policy-making and programme implementation levels are not matched by coordinated funding mechanisms. United Nations agencies involved in joint programmes are generally required to seek funding from their own funding bodies, with adverse effects on resource efficiency. In this context, efforts should be increased to enhance the effectiveness of cooperation between various agencies of the United Nations system with international financial institutions, including those outside the United Nations system such as regional development banks. There is, moreover, a need for further development of joint funding arrangements, so that joint funding proposals can be presented for more effective consideration by appropriate funding institutions and mechanisms.

Notes

* E/CN.17/1997/2.

UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

ACC

Administrative Committee on Coordination

ACC/1997/2
8 July 1997

ENGLISH ONLY

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS OF THE ORGANIZATIONAL COMMITTEE AT ITS FIRST REGULAR SESSION (PARTS I AND II)

PART I

(Geneva, 20 to 22 and 24 March 1997)

INTRODUCTION

1. The Organizational Committee (OC) of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) met at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, from 20 to 22 and on 24 March 1997. OC amended and adopted an annotated agenda for the meeting, which is contained in annex I. The list of participants is contained in annex II. The outcome of a further meeting of OC, held immediately after the first regular session of 1997 of ACC, is reflected in part II of the present summary of conclusions. The list of participants for that further meeting (14 April 1997) is contained in annex IV.

I. PREPARATIONS FOR THE SECOND REGULAR SESSION OF ACC

A. Review of developments affecting international cooperation and development, and their implications for the United Nations system

1. Strengthening and reform of the United Nations system

2. OC, recognizing the priority attention being given to the issue of the strengthening and reform of the United Nations system, confirmed that the topic should be one of the interrelated themes for discussion by ACC under this agenda item.

3. The Chairman of OC briefed the Committee on developments since the issuance of the first ACC statement on reform. The ACC statement, while raising a number of important reform issues, had not had a wide-ranging impact, one of the reasons being the continuing and rapid developments that were taking place in the system in the area of reform. The view was expressed that the statement nevertheless provided a sound policy and programmatic basis for addressing further and in greater detail reform issues in the future.

4. The Chairman also briefed OC on the initial set of reform measures that had been introduced by the Secretary-General within the Organization (track 1), and outlined the way in which the Secretary-General approached the formulation of a

broader package of reform proposals (track 2) to be submitted to the General Assembly later in the year. The first set of reform measures related to managerial initiatives and other decisions that fell within the Secretary-General's authority. OC members expressed appreciation for the transparent process initiated by the Secretary-General, particularly his initiative to share the reform proposals with executive heads before their announcement, and expressed the hope that this would contribute to a new and more transparent management culture within the system. OC members indicated that their executive heads looked forward to a similar approach being followed in pursuing consultations in relation to further phases of the process. It was understood that the matter would be discussed at the private meeting during the ACC session.

5. OC suggested that further consideration should be given to ways of promoting a continuous information exchange on reform issues, possibly organized on the basis of the four sectors identified by the Secretary-General in the first phase of United Nations reform. It was suggested that, to the extent possible, electronic means should be utilized for this purpose.

6. The Chairman of the Committee recalled that work had been initiated, with the involvement of the jointly financed secretariats of the ACC Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (CCAQ) and the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ), for the preparation of a report on system-wide reform measures, and explained the reasons why it had not as yet proved feasible to complete and issue it, as originally planned. He suggested that this work should be resumed, with a view to issuing the publication during the next session of the General Assembly, so that it could take into account recent important developments in many organizations, including the Secretary-General's track 2 reform proposals.

7. OC exchanged information and views on reform-related developments in the organizations of the United Nations system, and noted that important initiatives had been and continued to be taken throughout the system by the executive heads, in cooperation with governing bodies in their respective organizations, to enhance efficiency, cost-effectiveness and relevance to the needs and expectations of member States. OC considered that ACC's discussions on reform should endeavour to identify and focus on the reform measures on which there was the greatest convergence, so as to bring about greater synergy and strengthen the collective impact of those measures on improving the overall functioning of the system. OC also stressed that United Nations organizations and agencies should develop capacities for evaluating reform measures, in order to ensure that their results led to real improvements in the delivery of services to member States. Other observations made during the discussions included the following:

(a) Approaches to United Nations reform should avoid over-centralization, at a time when decentralization was among the guiding concepts of the reforms under way in the private and governmental sectors;

(b) The ACC machinery should address issues in relation to which there were interfaces among the organizations of the system, in other words, grey

areas that did not fall under the mandate of any single organization and where joint action was required;

(c) There was a need to refine the definitions of normative and operational activities and the linkages between them;

(d) A "track 3" might eventually be necessary: governmental structures and United Nations system structures tended to mirror each other; the overall reform effort would have the desired impact to the extent that United Nations system reform was followed by reform at the level of Governments.

8. Drawing on its discussions on this topic, OC prepared annotations for the ACC's consideration of agenda item 2 (a), on review of developments affecting international cooperation and development and their implications for the United Nations system, for which the topic of the strengthening and reform of the United Nations had been selected as one of the themes.

2. Peace-building

9. In preparing for the ACC's discussion on this issue, which was the second main theme under item 2 in the ACC agenda, OC had before it a note by the United Nations, as well as the outcome of the consideration by CCPOQ of the role of the United Nations system in post-conflict recovery.

10. OC endorsed the view put forth in the United Nations note that not only did the concept of peace-building apply to post-conflict situations, but it needed also to be extended to activities aimed at preventing conflicts and to support measures during a conflict that would facilitate the peace process. It considered that more emphasis needed to be placed on "early warning", in order to prevent crisis situations from developing.

11. OC also shared the view of CCPOQ that the existing gaps between relief and development programmes had to be overcome and that the establishment of a flexible and pragmatic strategic framework for response to and recovery from crisis was essential to this end. Such a strategic approach, if it was to be effective in crisis response and recovery, should engage all partners in the United Nations system in accordance with their mandates, as well as national authorities, donor organizations and non-governmental organizations.

12. In the light of the above discussions, OC drew up annotations for the ACC agenda to help structure the ACC's consideration of this theme.

B. Follow-up, within the system, to ACC's initiatives and decisions

1. Coordinated follow-up to international conferences

13. OC had before it a background note containing an interim report on inter-agency activities and other developments relevant to the follow-up to global conferences. This was supplemented by oral updates on the work of the

three ad hoc task forces by OC representatives of the lead organizations of these task forces. OC welcomed the recommendation of CCPOQ to organize a workshop, possibly in early September of this year, to develop proposals, for submission through CCPOQ to ACC at its second regular session of 1997, on future collaborative action relevant to the follow-up to recent international conferences.

14. OC recalled that the existing task forces were time-bound in nature, and reiterated its understanding that they would be disbanded upon the completion of their work and the submission of their reports to ACC. While the need for new ad hoc task forces could not, and should not, be excluded, existing mechanisms within the standing machinery of ACC such as CCPOQ and the Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development (IACSD), were well placed to monitor the utilization, particularly at the field level, of the end products produced by the existing task forces.

15. OC proposed that ACC approve the recommendation of CCPOQ that the arrangements set forth by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) to replace the former Subcommittee on Rural Development should be designated as the mechanism for inter-agency follow-up to the World Food Summit. Under these arrangements, thematic groups covering food security and related issues would be constituted at the country level, within the resident coordinator system. At the headquarters level, FAO would assume responsibility for the overall operation of a network of interested organizations, including also non-United Nations actors, to backstop these country-level groups and promote common approaches. IFAD would manage a monitoring and evaluation component, inter alia, to collect, analyse and disseminate selected country experiences. Reporting to ACC would occur, as appropriate, through CCPOQ and/or through IACSD. Relevant outputs would also be made available to other mechanisms within or outside the ACC machinery.

16. OC noted the keen interest of member States in the work of the existing task forces. It urged that the report on the subject to be submitted by the Secretary-General to the substantive session of 1997 of the Economic and Social Council should highlight the concrete results being achieved through system-wide collaboration, as well as the intention of ACC to continue giving priority attention to supporting the results of recent global conferences, with the placing of special emphasis on country-level action.

17. In this connection, the organization of a panel discussion at the Economic and Social Council with the participation of representatives from the lead agencies of the three task forces, the chair of the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality (IACWGE), and representatives from the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and FAO was supported as a useful means of deriving advantages from, and as the kind of interactive discussion with member States that would demonstrate clearly the valuable lessons learned from, the cooperative approaches introduced by ACC within the framework of the follow-up to international conferences.

18. OC also considered that both CCPOQ and IACSD should give attention to determining the best means of sustaining an effective utilization, particularly at the country level, of the end products of the task forces.

19. In light of the information provided in the background note and of the supplementary information provided by the lead organizations of the three ad hoc task forces, OC drew up annotations for the ACC agenda to help structure ACC consideration of this item.

2. United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa

20. Two background notes on the item were introduced by a representative of the secretariat of the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa. The first covered the contribution of the Special Initiative to the implementation of the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN/NADAF),[1] and the second focused on progress in the implementation of the Special Initiative itself.

21. OC considered that the matrix linking the priorities of UN/NADAF and the recommendations of the mid-term review of UN/NADAF with the priority areas of the Special Initiative was useful in demonstrating the contribution of the Special Initiative to the effective implementation of UN/NADAF. The hope was expressed that the identification of these linkages would also help streamline or merge reporting requirements in relation to both UN/NADAF and the Special Initiative.

22. OC made a number of suggestions to improve the matrix, including the introduction of double entries into the matrix to ensure a more comprehensive coverage of activities, and hoped that these suggestions would be pursued by the Steering Committee of the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa at its next meeting immediately prior to the ACC session. It was understood that the matrix would be further refined.

23. OC recalled that the Special Initiative needed to be seen in the broader context of all other ongoing activities contributing to African development, and underscored the importance of strengthening linkages between the Special Initiative and other United Nations system-wide efforts, including ongoing inter-agency activities related to the follow-up to major conferences, as well as other relevant initiatives of individual organizations. ACC expressed the hope that, in reporting to ACC on the achievements of the Special Initiative to date and on the future directions of this work, the Steering Committee would give special attention to ways of promoting specific results, and would identify clear benchmarks for monitoring future progress, focusing on concrete country-level impact.

24. Given the need to maintain the momentum for the Special Initiative at this early phase of implementation, OC suggested that this item continue, at least for the immediate future, to feature in the agenda of ACC.

25. In light of the above discussions, and the information provided by the secretariat of the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa on

the outcome of the meeting of the technical working group held in Addis Ababa on 6 and 7 March, OC drew up annotations for the ACC agenda to help structure the Committee's consideration of this item.

3. Universal access to basic communication and information services

26. The representative of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) introduced the report on the outcome of this inter-agency project. OC commended ITU for its leadership of the project and highlighted two important results of the initiative. The first was the establishment of the fact that it had now become essential to consider the extent to which rapid technological advances triggered the emergence of a right to communicate. The second was the highlighting of the promotion of universal access to basic communication and information services as a priority objective of the United Nations system, with such access contributing to achieving the overarching goal of securing sustainable development for all.

27. Another important feature of the outcome of the project was to reinforce the common intention of the organizations of the United Nations system to harmonize and coordinate their strategies for modernizing and enhancing capacities and effectiveness in this area. In this context, OC expressed strong support for the proposal to create a United Nations system-wide Intranet (Internet for internal use), as a means to facilitate an effective integration of the competencies of all concerned United Nations organizations in support of country-level action. In the same context, OC members shared the view that there was an urgent need for a strategic and systematic approach to information and communication technologies (ICT) and information management that would ensure compatibility, accessibility and convergence of communications and computer-based systems among the organizations of the system. The Committee agreed that the Information Systems Coordination Committee (ISCC) should ensure follow-up within the system to those recommendations of the project coming within its purview.

28. In the light of its discussions, OC drew up annotations for the ACC agenda to help prepare for the ACC's consideration of this item, and recommended the adoption by ACC of a statement on universal access to basis communication and information services.

4. Graça Machel study on the impact of armed conflict on children

29. The representative of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) introduced the background note prepared by his organization on the Graça Machel study on the impact of armed conflict on children, and the actions taken on the study at the last session of the General Assembly.

30. OC noted that the study, which was the result of a wide process of consultation over a two-year period, was the most comprehensive human rights appraisal of children affected by armed conflict ever debated by Member States

in the General Assembly. OC's discussions focused on ways in which the organizations of the system could assist, within their respective mandates, in the effective and timely implementation of the study's recommendations, as requested by the Assembly in its resolution 51/77 (II).

31. OC's discussion on the issue, including the formulation of draft recommendations for the consideration of ACC, is reflected in the relevant annotations to the ACC agenda.

C. Other matters

1. Functioning of ACC and its subsidiary machinery

32. Recognizing that questions relating to the functioning of ACC itself and secretariat support for the ACC machinery were directly relevant to the overall questions of system-wide reform, OC decided to include some observations and recommendations on the functioning of ACC and its subsidiary machinery in the annotations for the ACC's discussion of agenda item 2.1 on "Strengthening and reform of the United Nations system".

2. Administrative questions

33. OC recalled that ACC, at its second regular session of 1996, had requested the United Nations to invite the General Assembly, on behalf of ACC, to institute an independent review, to be carried out in 1997 by a group of auditors-general or former auditors-general of selected member States, of the role and functions of the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU), focusing on the relevance, effectiveness and cost-efficiency of the JIU studies, and resulting in recommendations to the Assembly on the future role of JIU, the optimal resources needed to fulfil that role, and the opportunities provided by outsourcing studies. The consultations on the subject, to be carried out by the United Nations with the President of the Assembly, were also to include the feasibility of postponing elections to fill vacancies in the membership of JIU due to take place at the fifty-first session of the Assembly, as a cost-containment measure.

34. OC was informed by its Chairman that the Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management had met with the President of the General Assembly to convey the ACC recommendations, but that the Assembly itself had not yet considered the matter. While a postponement of the elections due this year did not appear any longer feasible, the proposal for an independent review was still on the table and it was expected that the Assembly would take up the matter at a resumed session during the course of the year.

35. OC's preparations for the consideration of this item by ACC were also based on the outcome of the eighty-sixth session of the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (Financial and Budgetary Questions) (CCAQ(FB)) held at the United Nations Office at Vienna, from 10 to 14 February 1997.

36. Regarding the issue of the budgets of jointly financed bodies for 1998-1999, OC noted that, while the proposed programme budgets of the three jointly financed bodies of the ACC machinery (CCAQ, CCPOQ and ISCC) were within the resource target levels as recommended to ACC and had, as such, been approved by CCAQ(FB) on behalf of ACC, the proposed budgets of JIU and the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC) were in excess of the zero real growth resource target levels. Furthermore, the review of the work of the ICSC secretariat, called for in General Assembly resolution 51/216 (VIII), had not yet been undertaken, nor had the Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (Personnel and General Administrative Questions) (CCAQ(PER)) and ICSC itself reviewed the budget proposals. These factors had further constrained the ability of CCAQ(FB) to complete a comprehensive review of the ICSC budget proposals.

37. On the basis of the above-mentioned report and its discussions, OC prepared annotations to the ACC agenda.

38. OC also noted that, in accordance with established practice, ACC would hear statements from, and have an exchange of views with, the representatives of the Federation of International Civil Servants' Associations (FICSA) and the Coordinating Committee for International Staff Unions and Associations of the United Nations System (CCISUA). The Chairman of OC indicated that he was in contact with the representatives of these bodies regarding their participation. In the case of ICSC, he noted that the Commission had not met since the last session of ACC and that for this reason, as well as owing to personnel constraints, its Chairman would not be available to participate in the ACC session.

3. Inauguration of the United Nations Staff College project

39. OC was briefed on the status of the United Nations Staff College project, its objectives and proposed institutional framework, and was informed of arrangements for its inauguration, in which ACC members were invited to participate, by the Secretary-General on 12 April. Such participation was intended to highlight and reinforce the system-wide character of the project.

4. Other issues

40. OC arranged for relevant aspects of the reports of CCPOQ (document ACC/1997/7), of IACSD (document ACC/1997/1), of CCAQ(FB) (document ACC/1997/5), and of IACWGE (documents ACC/1996/22 and ACC/1997/8) to be drawn to the attention of ACC, as relevant, under the appropriate agenda items.

41. Meetings of ACC subsidiary bodies proposed to be held before the next session of ACC are as follows:

IACSD	Geneva (hosted by the World Health Organization (WHO))	Week of 15 September 1997
CCPOQ	New York	22 to 26 September 1997
CCAQ(FB)	New York	25 to 29 August 1997

II. RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE ORGANIZATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM AND CIVIL SOCIETY

42. The representative of the International Labour Organization (ILO) introduced the background paper he had prepared on the issue at the Committee's request. The paper was well received by OC members, who considered that it provided a good conceptual basis for further inter-agency consideration of the topic.

43. OC recommended that the issue of the relationship between the United Nations system and civil society should be a main theme in the agenda of the second regular session of ACC for 1997, as it was a very topical subject and in addition encompassed a significant dimension of United Nations system reform. The documentation for ACC should encompass both normative and operational aspects and include information on agency collaboration with civil society as well as examples of best practices with a clear indication, whenever possible, of the value gained.

44. Regarding the definition of civil society, OC considered that a broad definition, encompassing the whole range of non-State actors, including the private sector, should be used in preparing for the ACC discussion.

45. It was suggested that an informal meeting of interested OC members be convened in Geneva at the time of the upcoming first regular session of ACC in order to advance preparations for the ACC discussions at the second regular session, and to ascertain what further information on individual institutional experience might be required. In addition, further informal discussions should also be held during the occasion of the substantive session of 1997 of the Economic and Social Council in Geneva. The ILO representative was invited to continue to take the lead in the preparation of the documentation to be submitted to ACC.

46. It was decided that all member organizations of ACC, as well as the main consultative committees of ACC (CCPOQ, IACSD, IACWGE), should be requested to provide inputs into the study. CCPOQ could, in particular, contribute to the identification of best practices within the system. In this context reference was made to an upcoming Geneva consultation, to be organized by the Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS) in April.

III. WORK OF ACC CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEES AND OTHER INTER-AGENCY BODIES

A. Work of ACC consultative committees

47. In the exercise of its functions in respect of preparing the ACC session, as well as of assisting ACC and/or acting on its behalf in monitoring the overall functioning of the ACC machinery, OC considered and took note of the following reports of ACC bodies: CCAQ(FB), IACSD, CCPOQ and IACWGE.

1. Report of the eighty-sixth session of CCAQ(FB) (ACC/1997/5), International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Vienna, 10 to 14 February 1997

48. The Secretary of CCAQ(FB) briefed OC on the work of the eighty-sixth session of the Committee held at the United Nations Office at Vienna, from 10 to 14 February 1997.

49. OC shared the concerns of CCAQ(FB) concerning current budgetary pressures, and noted that the improvements in collections of assessed contributions registered at the end of December 1996, as compared with the situation that had prevailed at the end of December 1995, were expected to provide only a temporary respite. Non-payment and/or delayed payment of assessed contributions continued to pose very serious problems for the system. While improved efficiency and cost-effectiveness continued to be a high priority for managers of financial administration and support services, there was concern in CCAQ(FB) that further reductions of administrative costs might result in damage to the integrity of financial control systems.

50. With regard to the programme budget proposals of the jointly financed bodies, OC noted that CCAQ(FB) had approved, on behalf of ACC, the budget proposals for 1998-1999 of CCAQ, CCPOQ and ISCC, and welcomed the fact that the secretariats of these bodies had submitted budgets that incorporated real reductions and were within the target budget levels as recommended to ACC by CCAQ(FB) at its August 1996 session.

51. OC noted that the budget proposal for ICSC for 1998-1999 had been reviewed by CCAQ(FB) which had recommended certain reductions. OC also noted the concern expressed by CCAQ(FB) that a proposed ICSC meeting in a field location would most likely involve extra costs for the ICSC secretariat as well as for participants from member organizations. OC further noted with concern that there appeared to have been little progress so far with the review of the work of ICSC called for in General Assembly resolution 51/216, and urged that the review be concluded as speedily as possible.

52. With regard to the budget proposals for JIU, OC recalled that ACC's request, at its second regular session of 1996, that the President of the General Assembly be approached by the United Nations, on the Committee's behalf, with regard to the feasibility of postponing the elections to fill the five forthcoming vacancies in JIU (see paras. 33 and 34 above) had been conceived as a cost-containment measure, pending the outcome of an independent review of the role and functioning of JIU. OC also shared CCAQ(FB)'s concern that the JIU budget proposals, in addition to providing for the full complement of Inspector posts throughout 1998-1999, also provided for one additional Professional level post in the JIU secretariat. OC noted that the JIU budget proposal was well in excess of the budget target level recommended to ACC by CCAQ(FB) as well as in excess of the indicative amount set by the United Nations in January 1997.

53. OC concurred with the adjustments to the budget proposals for ICSC and JIU recommended in paragraphs 16 and 20 of the report of CCAQ(FB) on its session. OC recalled that, under the statutes of ICSC and JIU, the budget estimates for

these bodies for submission to the General Assembly were to be drawn up by the Secretary-General after consultation with ACC. Thus, in endorsing the recommended adjustments to these budgets, OC expressed the hope that they would be fully reflected in the budget estimates to be submitted by the United Nations to the Assembly.

54. One organization informed the Committee that it intended to reduce the amounts it contributed to jointly financed activities in its budget proposals for 1998-1999. In this connection, it was recalled that all organizations were bound by the terms of the statutes of JIU and ICSC which stated that an organization could not withdraw its acceptance of the statute until it had given the Secretary-General two years' notice of its intention to do so. It was further recalled that the statutes provided that the expenditures of JIU and ICSC should be shared by the organizations in a manner to be agreed by them, and that there were long-standing agreements regarding cost-sharing arrangements for the jointly financed activities that had been approved by CCAQ(FB) on behalf of ACC.

2. Report of the ninth meeting of IACSD (ACC/1997/1), United Nations Headquarters, New York, 20 and 21 February 1997

55. The Secretary of IACSD briefed OC on the work of the ninth meeting of IACSD. OC noted that the meeting had focused on the preparations for the fifth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, with particular emphasis on issues relating to the 1997 special session of the General Assembly. In this connection, OC welcomed the fact that IACSD had finalized a draft of the ACC statement to be addressed to the Assembly at its 1997 special session, and noted that the draft was being cleared by ACC members by correspondence.

56. Regarding the participation of agencies and organizations of the United Nations system in the special session of the General Assembly, OC noted that arrangements were being made by the President of the Assembly for a number of statements from United Nations bodies and organizations to be included in the formal deliberations of the Plenary of the special session, on the basis of the following two criteria, namely (a) that the organization was either a task manager for one of the chapters of Agenda 21[2] or one of the international financial institutions of the United Nations system and (b) that the statement would be delivered at the level of the executive head of the organization. In addition to delivering statements in the Plenary, United Nations bodies and organizations would have other opportunities to participate in the special session, including in the work of the Ad Hoc Committee of the Whole and in the organization of side events. Given the importance of the special session for future work on Agenda 21 at the global and intergovernmental levels, as well as its implications for the work programmes of United Nations bodies and organizations, OC considered that organizations should be encouraged to participate in the work of the special session at the senior-most level.

3. Report of CCPOQ on its tenth session (ACC/1997/7), Palais des Nations, Geneva, 3-7 March 1997

57. The Secretary of CCPOQ drew the attention of OC to those aspects of the Committee's work and recommendations that had been brought to the attention of ACC. They related to the United Nations system's response to post-conflict rehabilitation and reconstruction, the coordinated follow-up to the international conferences, and the contribution of CCPOQ to the review of the ACC subsidiary machinery. He noted in particular that a very comprehensive process had been followed in developing the proposals on responses to crisis situations, which had included reviews by CCPOQ at its ninth and tenth sessions, two consultancy analyses based on extensive consultations within the United Nations system and with external partners, technical preparation by a working group, and close interaction with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC).

58. With regard to other items in CCPOQ's agenda, the Secretary made particular reference to the extensive work being undertaken in the field of operational activities for development, notably in regard to the improved functioning of the resident coordinator system. He also referred to the satisfactory conclusion of the efforts to co-locate the CCAQ and CCPOQ secretariats at the Palais des Nations in Geneva; and to the future participation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in CCPOQ.

59. OC members expressed appreciation for the report and recommendations of CCPOQ. It was generally felt that CCPOQ's recent work reflected definite progress in responding to the recommendations of ACC concerning the need for a better balance in the Committee's work programme between programme coordination issues and operational activities, as well as in selecting topics for its agenda, and preparing inter-agency and intergovernmental discussions that addressed issues of central policy concern. It was hoped that CCPOQ, in pursuing such work, would particularly focus on linkages between normative and operational issues, draw on the experience of the ACC task forces and make flexible use of the task manager approach.

60. OC noted the proposals developed by CCPOQ on arrangements to pursue inter-agency work relating to the coordinated follow-up to international conferences, including the follow-up to the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and the World Food Summit (see also in this connection para. 14 above). It noted, in particular, the proposed successor arrangements for the work of the former ACC Subcommittee on Rural Development, at both the field and the headquarters level, and their intended use in the follow-up to the World Food Summit.

61. On behalf of ACC, OC invited CCPOQ to finalize the revision of the ACC programme classification, in time for its introduction, after clearance by CCAQ(FB), and endorsement by ACC, as of the biennium 1998-1999.

62. OC noted the recommendation of CCPOQ that a mechanism for inter-agency consultations on modalities for operational cooperation with non-governmental organizations be located in NGLS, and that this recommendation would be referred to the NGLS sponsors group and to the Joint United Nations Information Committee

(JUNIC), prior to its consideration by OC and submission to ACC at its second regular session of 1997.

4. Reports of IACWGE on its first and second sessions (ACC/1996/22 and ACC/1997/8), United Nations Headquarters, New York, 22 and 23 October 1996, and 5 and 6 March 1997

63. With regard to the reports of IACWGE on its first and second sessions, OC noted the steps taken by the Committee to organize its work. Considering that the mainstreaming of a gender perspective throughout the United Nations system was being proposed as a main theme for discussion at a session of ACC in 1998, as a central concern of all ACC members, OC suggested that the Committee give due priority in the months ahead to preparing a draft advocacy statement on the subject for adoption by ACC.

B. Reports of bodies reporting to OC

Report of ISCC on its fourth session (ACC/1996/18), Palais des Nations, Geneva, 7-9 October 1996

64. The report of ISCC on its fourth session was introduced by the Secretary of the Committee. The report contained a number of recommendations for the attention of OC, relating to:

(a) Information systems technology and services;

(b) Wider accessibility of information;

(c) Terms of reference of ISCC;

(d) Appointment of the Secretary of the Committee;

(e) Proposed agenda, dates and venue for the fifth session of the Committee;

(f) Location of the ISCC secretariat.

65. OC considered that ISCC was undertaking excellent work in an area of growing importance to the United Nations system. While recognizing that much progress had been achieved, and that harmonization would have financial implications for all parts of the system, OC members expressed strong reservations about different aspects of the funding mechanism proposed by ISCC for information systems technology and services, and considered that the proposal would require careful review before further action could be taken. The Committee thus requested ISCC to provide clarification on the proposal, and decided to revert to it at a subsequent session, prior to seeking the views of CCAQ(FB), if necessary.

66. OC commended the United Nations Shared Cataloguing and Public Access System (UNCAPS) as a valuable product for the system. It also considered that the proposed inter-agency Intranet should be pursued by the Committee, in connection with the follow-up to paragraph 17 of the draft statement of the Inter-Agency Project on Universal Access to Basic Communication and Information Services. In general, the need for harmonized and more compatible computer systems throughout United Nations organizations was recognized, and ISCC was encouraged to explore options and to make further recommendations in this regard.

67. With respect to wider accessibility of information, ISCC's focus on the expanded use of the Internet was endorsed. OC, on behalf of ACC, also endorsed the Model Policy Statement on Publishing and Disseminating Information in an Electronic Age (see annex III for full text), and urged that the policy be adapted by each individual agency to its own requirements, and pursued by each as one element of a more harmonized approach to the presentation to the world community of United Nations system information by electronic means. The ISCC proposals for its 1998-1999 proposed work programme on information infrastructure, improvement of access to information and modernization of dissemination of information were generally supported, as were the working methods adopted by the Committee, including the increased use of videoconferencing.

68. It was noted that, in implementing the database of Information Systems Applications of United Nations Organizations (UNAPPS), ISCC had fulfilled an important responsibility connected with one element of its terms of reference: that of providing an electronic repository on information system development within the United Nations system.

69. The recommendation of ISCC that its current Secretary, Mr. John Northcut, be appointed for a second term was endorsed by OC. At the same time, OC expressed serious reservations with regard to the proposed temporary relocation of the ISCC secretariat from Geneva to New York, bearing in mind the importance attached by ACC to having the jointly financed secretariats of its subsidiary bodies co-located in Geneva. OC requested further information on the rationale for such a temporary relocation, and agreed to revert to this issue at the second part of its session.

70. OC also considered under this item a proposal by the International Computing Centre (ICC) to present a briefing on information technology to ACC at its first regular session. Noting that inclusion of a similar briefing in a United Nations Staff College project on management training was intended, OC preferred to await the results of this initiative before formulating a recommendation to ACC. The earliest occasion for such a briefing to ACC would thus be the 1997 fall session of ACC.

IV. OTHER MATTERS

Future sessions of OC and ACC

71. Consideration of this item was postponed to part II of the OC session.

PART II

(Geneva, 14 April 1997)

INTRODUCTION

72. OC met on 14 April 1997 at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, to consider the follow-up to the decisions taken and conclusions reached by ACC at its first regular session of 1997 on 10 and 11 April 1997 (see ACC/1997/4), and to conclude the consideration of a number of issues included in the agenda of the first part of its session.

73. The list of participants is contained in annex IV.

Peace-building

74. OC pursued the discussions on this item that it had initiated during part I of its current session. OC expressed broad support for the proposals of CCPOQ relating to the principle of a strategic approach for response to, and recovery from, crisis; establishment of early warning arrangements; and the establishment of a working group to facilitate all aspects of the application of the approach. OC nevertheless stressed that:

(a) Adequate involvement and consultation with national authorities should be ensured;

(b) A clear distinction between what would be done at the country level and what would be done at the headquarters level should be clarified;

(c) ACC subsidiary machinery including CCPOQ, in participating in this work, should not have an operational role that would conflict with the roles of member organizations;

(d) Care should be taken to ensure that the CCPOQ proposal did not result in the creation of additional machinery. Rather, the use of existing machinery and mechanisms should be fully explored;

(e) The integration of United Nations system support for humanitarian and development requirements should reduce, and not increase, inter-agency arrangements.

I. RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE ORGANIZATIONS OF THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM AND CIVIL SOCIETY

75. Since it had not been possible to convene a meeting of interested OC members during the first regular session of ACC as originally envisaged, OC agreed that an informal meeting of OC should be held in Geneva during the first part of the substantive session of 1997 of the Economic and Social Council to consider the matter further. The Chairman of OC was requested to determine the

most appropriate date for the meeting after consultations with members of the Committee.

II. WORK OF ACC CONSULTATIVE COMMITTEES AND OTHER INTER-AGENCY BODIES

Reports of bodies reporting to OC

Report of ISCC on its fourth session

76. OC, in light of the decision of ACC that the secretariats of the jointly financed bodies of its subsidiary machinery should be co-located in Geneva, concluded that the ISCC secretariat should remain in Geneva.

III. OTHER MATTERS

A. Future sessions of OC and ACC

77. ACC had decided that its second regular session of 1997 would be held at United Nations Headquarters in New York on 31 October and 1 November 1997. With regard to the dates of the next OC session in New York, the middle of the first week of October 1997 was tentatively identified, taking into account, inter alia, the timing of the meeting of IACSD and the session of CCPOQ which had been scheduled for the second half of September, and conflicting schedules of some members of OC during the early part of October. The view was reiterated that the dates of future meetings of OC should be set to provide adequate preparatory time for the sessions of ACC, including the recognition of the need for appropriate briefings of executive heads before the meetings of ACC.

B. Functioning of ACC and its subsidiary machinery

78. Members of OC expressed the view that the Committee would need to assess its own functioning and methods of work, particularly with regard to the length and timing of its sessions, the preparation of documentation and the drafting and approval of its reports. It was therefore agreed that OC would review these issues at its next session.

Notes

[1] General Assembly resolution 46/151, annex, sect. II.

[2] Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992, vol. I, Resolutions Adopted by the Conference (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigendum), resolution 1, annex II.

Annex I

ANNOTATED AGENDA

1. Adoption of the agenda

2. Preparations for the first regular session of ACC

1. In the context of its review of the functioning of the ACC machinery, ACC, at its first regular session of 1996, concluded that it should "strengthen its capacity to develop common assessments of the environment in which international cooperation and development were taking place and of the resource outlooks; of emerging developments among key constituencies and Governments; and of the expectations of member Governments and the public for the efficient and effective delivery of services, particularly at the country level, including linkages between bilateral and multilateral assistance and between emergency, post-emergency and development assistance" (ACC/1996/4, para. 41).

2. In preparing annotations for this agenda item, OC may wish to provide for an initial exchange of views by executive heads on recent developments affecting the environment for international cooperation and development, and make suggestions, in the light of the above ACC conclusion, on how such an exchange might best be organized.

(a) Review of developments affecting international cooperation and development, and their implications for the United Nations system: peacekeeping, rehabilitation and development

(i) Strengthening and reform of the United Nations system

3. OC, recognizing the priority attention being given to the issue of strengthening and reform of the United Nations system, considered that the topic should be one of the interrelated themes for discussion under this agenda item.

4. It will be recalled that, at its last session (second regular session of 1996), ACC carried out a wide-ranging review of the direction of ongoing reform processes in the United Nations system and their implications for the strengthening of the system.

5. ACC decided to issue a joint statement on the reform and strengthening of the United Nations system (ACC/1996/20, annex I), the text of which was issued in document SG/SM/6106. It was further decided that a synthesis report on developments in reform processes within the United Nations system should be prepared and updated from time to time.

6. Following the session, inputs from organizations were requested, and the cooperation of the jointly financed secretariats was enlisted, for the preparation of the first synthesis report. OC will be updated on progress in the preparation of such a report. In the same context, OC may wish to formulate recommendations on the way in which discussions on reform issues might be pursued in ACC at its forthcoming session, as well as at future sessions. It

should be recalled, in this context, that "ACC agreed to focus its future work programme on priority issues on the global agenda that had implications for system-wide coordination and cooperation and could serve to advance the substantive goals of the reform process, as outlined in its joint statement" (ACC/1996/20, para. 10).

(ii) Peace-building

7. With regard to the other specific theme to be considered under this item, in accordance with the ACC decision that it should, at each session, take up "one or two broad themes of central concern to the system" (ACC/1996/4, para. 42), it will be recalled that a theme relating to "the strengthening of inter-agency coordination in situations where peacemaking or peacekeeping are to proceed in parallel with emergency relief, reconstruction and the resumption of economic and social development"* had originally been identified for discussion at the second regular session of ACC for 1996, and subsequently remitted for consideration to the first regular session for 1997.

8. A note on this theme is currently being prepared for submission to ACC, taking into account, inter alia, relevant issues currently under consideration in CCPOQ. The note will endeavour to define a heading and the parameters for this theme, as well as to identify specific policy issues on which discussions of executive heads might most profitably be focused. The note will be available at the time of the session of OC.

(b) Follow-up, within the system, to ACC's initiatives and decisions

(i) Coordinated follow-up to international conferences

9. At the second regular session of ACC of 1995, executive heads reiterated that monitoring the follow-up by the United Nations system to recent global conferences would remain a main concern of ACC in the period ahead. In order to contribute to a coordinated and integrated follow-up, ACC decided that, in the future, it would review the implementation of the results of recent global conferences on the basis of a thematic approach, drawing on the work of its standing machinery and other relevant inter-agency mechanisms. At the same session, ACC decided to establish three ad hoc inter-agency task forces to provide integrated support to follow-up action at the country level, around three interrelated themes:

(a) The enabling environment for social and economic development;

(b) Employment and sustainable livelihoods;

(c) Basic social services for all.

10. At its two regular sessions of 1996, ACC reviewed the work being undertaken by these task forces, including related actions being taken at the national and international levels, and formulated recommendations to guide their further activities (ACC/1996/4, paras. 23-37 and ACC/1996/20, paras. 11-24). At its second regular session of 1996, ACC decided to undertake, at its first regular session of 1997, a first comprehensive assessment of overall progress within the

system in promoting the coordinated follow-up to recent global conferences, including the effectiveness of the new inter-agency mechanisms that it had established for that purpose, and to consider further arrangements to be made to pursue such work within the inter-agency machinery.

11. It now appears that not all of the task forces will have concluded their work by the time of the OC/ACC first regular sessions, and it may therefore be necessary for ACC to pursue and finalize this assessment at its October 1997 session. In so doing, ACC will also be in a position to take into account the outcome of the consideration of issues relating to the work of these task forces at the coordination segment of the substantive session of 1997 of the Economic and Social Council in July 1997.

12. A note reviewing developments in the work of these task forces, and containing elements for initiating the assessment to be undertaken by ACC, is under preparation and will be circulated to OC members before the session.

13. Under this item, the report of the ninth meeting of IACSD, held at United Nations Headquarters in New York, on 20 and 21 February 1997, will also be available. At that meeting, IACSD, inter alia, reviewed preparations for the fifth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development with particular emphasis on issues relating to the 1997 special session of the General Assembly.

14. It will be recalled that, in accordance with the relevant ACC decisions, the last phase of the review of the functioning of IACSD was expected to result in a statement by ACC addressed to the General Assembly at its 1997 special session, which also was to be available in time for the April session (7-25 April 1997) of the Commission on Sustainable Development (which was acting as the preparatory committee for the special session). ACC accordingly requested IACSD to finalize the draft statement at its ninth meeting, and agreed that the draft would thereafter be formally approved by ACC members by correspondence. The draft statement is attached to the report of the ninth meeting of IACSD (ACC/1997/1, annex V).

(ii) United Nations System-wide Special Initiative on Africa

15. Pursuant to the relevant decisions taken by ACC at its second regular session of 1995, the United Nations System-wide Special Initiative for Africa was launched in March 1996. At its two regular sessions of 1996, ACC reviewed the progress achieved since the launching of the Special Initiative, and formulated a number of conclusions and recommendations to guide the further implementation of the Special Initiative (ACC/1996/4, paras. 5-22, and ACC/1996/20, paras. 29-31).

16. A note informing ACC of developments since the second regular session of 1996, in the light of the recommendations formulated by ACC at that session, is currently being prepared, and will be available in advance of the session of OC.

(iii) Universal access to basic communications and information services

17. At its first regular session of 1996, ACC launched an inter-agency project on universal access to basic communications and information services, under the

leadership of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU). At its second regular session of 1996, ACC was informed of the work being undertaken, and agreed to consider a report on the project at the first regular session of 1997. The report on the project will be available prior to the OC session.

(iv) Graça Machel study on the impact of armed conflict on children

18. At the request of the General Assembly, Ms. Graça Machel was appointed to undertake a study on the impact of armed conflict on children. The Assembly, at its fifty-first session, acted on the findings of the study in its resolution 51/77 (II). In view of the importance and inter-agency interest of the subject, it was proposed that ACC consider the matter in 1997, in the light of the outcome of the Assembly's discussion. A note outlining the main recommendations of the study, and the Assembly's action thereon, is currently being prepared and will be made available to OC.

(c) Other matters

(i) Functioning of ACC and its subsidiary machinery

19. At the second regular session of ACC of 1995, OC was requested to review the programmes of work and scheduling of meetings of inter-agency bodies within the ACC machinery, and to make recommendations for their streamlining. The Committee was further invited to strengthen its capacity to monitor, and report on, the follow-up to ACC decisions within the ACC machinery as well as within individual organizations of the system. It was subsequently concluded that these tasks would best be pursued as part of an overall review of the experience with the 1993 reorganization of the ACC machinery, provided for in the decisions adopted by ACC at that time.

20. At its two regular sessions of 1996, ACC had before it a number of proposals submitted by OC on steps to further reinforce ACC's own functioning, and streamline the working methods and meeting requirements of its subsidiary bodies.

21. In the light of these proposals, ACC adopted a number of measures to enhance its own effectiveness and methods of work, and agreed on a number of considerations to guide the further review of the functioning of its subsidiary machinery. ACC decided to revert to these issues at its first regular session of 1997 with a view to completing the review at its second regular session of 1997.

22. Under this item, OC will need to consider what further recommendations it wishes to address to ACC for its action at the first regular session of 1997, and for completing the review at the second regular session. In the same context, OC will also need to report to ACC on developments regarding the co-location of inter-agency-financed secretariats in Geneva, and to elaborate further suggestions, for consideration by ACC, on the strengthening of networking arrangements among the jointly financed secretariats and concerned units in the United Nations.

(ii) Administrative questions

23. At its second regular session of 1996, ACC had before it, for its consideration, a report on the conclusions reached at the high-level meeting of CCAQ held at United Nations Headquarters, New York, on 18 and 19 September 1996. OC may wish to inform ACC of the follow-up given to the conclusions reached by ACC on the basis of the report of CCAQ, including on the cost-efficiency and future role of JIU, in the light of information to be provided by the United Nations.

24. Under this item, the attention of ACC will also be drawn to any issues arising from the reports of CCAQ(PER) and CCAQ(FB) requiring ACC's action.

25. In the context of its consideration of this agenda item, it has been the practice of ACC to hear statements from, and to have an exchange of views with, the Chairman of ICSC, and representatives of FICSA and CCISUA.

(iii) Other issues

26. Other issues arising from the OC session, and from the reports of other subsidiary bodies requiring ACC's action or attention, will be identified and brought to the attention of ACC.

27. Arrangements will be made during the OC session for the preparation of a single paper for ACC, which would also serve as the annotated agenda, and incorporate all material requiring ACC's attention and/or action.

4. Relationships between the organizations of the United Nations system and civil society

28. At its first regular session of 1996, OC agreed to include in the agenda of its next session an item on the relationship between the organizations of the United Nations system and civil society, in the light of developments in organizations and ongoing work within the ACC machinery. OC initiated a discussion on the issue at its second regular session of 1996, on the basis of information provided by several members of the Committee. OC invited the representative of ILO to consult with members of the Committee and other interested parties and, on that basis, to take the lead in developing a discussion paper, for review by OC at its first regular session of 1997, that could assist the Committee in initiating preparations for an ACC discussion on the subject, possibly at the second regular session of 1997. It was considered that the main objective of the paper should be to introduce a comprehensive but also well-focused delineation of the concept of civil society, which would assist OC in ensuring that the proposed ACC discussion made a significant contribution to policy development and led to specific policy outcomes, including an assessment by ACC of the implications for the system of present trends, and the identification of desirable future directions for the system as a whole in expanding partnerships with civil society. A discussion paper on the subject will accordingly be before OC.

5. Work of ACC consultative committees and other inter-agency bodies

(a) Work of ACC Consultative Committees

(i) Report of the eighty-sixth session of CCAQ(FB) (document ACC/1997/5), IAEA and UNIDO, Vienna, 10 to 14 February 1997

(ii) Report of the ninth meeting of IACSD (document ACC/1997/1), United Nations Headquarters, New York, 20 and 21 February 1997

(iii) Report of CCPOQ on its tenth session (document ACC/1997/7), Palais des Nations, Geneva, 3 to 7 March 1997

(iv) Reports of IACWGE on its first and second sessions (documents ACC/1996/22 and ACC/1997/8), United Nations Headquarters, New York, 22 and 23 October 1996, and 5 and 6 March 1997

(b) Reports of bodies reporting to OC

Report of ISCC on its fourth session (document ACC/1996/18), Palais des Nations, Geneva, 7-9 October 1996

At its last session, "OC expressed appreciation at the progress being made by the Information System Coordination Committee (ISCC) in pursuing the objectives outlined in its terms of reference, and agreed to continue its review of the work of ISCC in the context of the ongoing overall review of the functioning of ACC and its subsidiary machinery" (ACC/1996/2, para. 35).

6. Other matters

Future sessions of OC and ACC

29. OC will need to make recommendations on ACC's work programme, and decide on its own programme, for the second regular session in 1997.

Notes

* See the letter of 23 May 1996 of Mr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali, former Secretary-General, to executive heads. The relevant paragraph of the letter read as follows: "As a new, main theme for the session, I would propose that we consider ways of enhancing inter-agency coordination in situations where a peacemaking or peacekeeping effort is to proceed in parallel with efforts to move forward from emergency relief to rehabilitation, reconstruction and the resumption of economic and social development. I have in mind, in particular, the support required by countries in special situations, usually arising from long-standing internal conflict, where the system is called upon to undertake a range of functions that extend beyond the scope of the standing arrangements for coordination of the system's operational activities for development and its humanitarian activities. Without establishing any new machinery, and bearing in mind that the main focus of coordination should remain at the country level, we need to strengthen the overall capacity of the system for early warning and for

assessing and exchanging information when a complex emergency situation appears to be imminent. We also need to enhance procedures for consultation and cooperation, particularly when a complex settlement of an internal conflict is being negotiated, to ensure that initiatives and contributions from various parts of the system are mutually supportive and conducive to an effective peace-building process. Any such procedures should be geared to maximizing support for closer inter-agency coordination and cooperation at the country level."

/...

Annex II

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

(Part I, Geneva, 20 to 22 and 24 March 1997)

Chairman: P. CIVILI (United Nations)

Secretary: C. HACKETT (United Nations)

United Nations entities and programmes

United Nations	
Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development	S. Khan
Office of Human Resources Management	J. Beagle
Department of Humanitarian Affairs	D. Saidy
United Nations Centre for Human Settlements	L. Ludvigsen
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development	J. Burley M. Plehn-Mejia
United Nations Environment Programme	A. Z. Amin
United Nations Children's Fund	A. Vaher B. O. Bassani
United Nations Development Programme	G. Gabriel N. Chandavakar D. Touré
United Nations Population Fund	M. Simonen
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	S. Berglund
United Nations International Drug Control Programme	G. Day
World Food Programme	W. H. Schleiffer

Specialized agencies, IAEA and WTO

International Labour Organization	G. Minet
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	W. Mann

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	L. Schaudinn M. Landry
International Civil Aviation Organization	G. Griffiths
World Health Organization	Y. Kawaguchi Maaza Bekele
World Bank	E. Pachter
International Monetary Fund	J. B. Zulu
Universal Postal Union	K. Samawi G. Kalicki
International Telecommunication Union	K. Boussaïd V. Paratian
World Meteorological Organization	S. Chacowry
International Maritime Organization	F. Labastida
World Intellectual Property Organization	K. J. Suedi
International Fund for Agricultural Development	U. Abhyankar
United Nations Industrial Development Organization	G. Papuli
* * *	
International Atomic Energy Agency	S. K. Sharma
* * *	
World Trade Organization	P. Pedersen
* * *	
Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (Personnel and General Administrative Questions)	R. Eggleston
Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (Financial and Budgetary Questions)	P. Leslie
Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions	D. Deane
* * *	
Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)	R. Chahil-Graf

Annex III

MODEL POLICY STATEMENT ON PUBLISHING AND DISSEMINATING INFORMATION IN AN ELECTRONIC AGE*

INTRODUCTION

This model policy statement consists initially of two parts.

Section I, which covers issues of a general nature, sets out guidelines that can be expected to stand the test of time for some years to come. In particular, it emphasizes the importance of information and its dissemination in a contemporary environment characterized by the growing use of information technology. However, section I is not intended to focus on any particular technology since it is recognized that rapid change in this area is a fact of life.

Subsequent sections will deal with issues of relevance to particular technologies. They will be designed to be used as long as appropriate, and to be discarded or rewritten as technological change is introduced.

Section II (the first of these additional sections) covers Internet publishing issues posed by the growing use of the World Wide Web.

As the policy evolves, it will be extended to cover:

(a) All means and media, including electronic display, printed documents and publications, audio recordings, videotapes and data transmission;

(b) All repositories of information, examples of which are public and press information, electronic databases, library services, statistical information, documents and publications.

The purpose of the model is not only to provide a harmonized view of what policies are appropriate for United Nations organizations but also to enable individual agencies to adopt the policy or adapt it to their own needs. Some agencies may choose to issue such a policy statement as an administrative instruction or staff notice. Others may wish to use it to prepare a working paper for their governing body or for a steering committee within their agency administration. It is intended that this decision be left to each agency.

In due course, additional sections can also be prepared in order to include older technologies, either as part of the model policy or to meet the specific requirements of individual organizations. In this way, the policy will provide comprehensive coverage of the main aspects of information access and dissemination.

For example, an existing (or newly developed) general policy on the provision of material on CD-ROM could be added as a separate section.

As the model policy now stands, it is designed to serve as one building block of current relevance to an overall policy.

I. GENERAL ISSUES

1. The importance of information access

1.1 It is generally agreed that information resources are among the organization's most valuable assets and deserve careful management.

1.2 For many years, electronic technology has been used in the production of information. Since 1990, however, the growing importance of on-line electronic access to information, in accordance with the express wishes of member States, has been recognized.

1.3 The organization intends to make information available electronically and on-line on demand, using contemporary technology. That technology is expected to evolve and to change for the foreseeable future.

1.4 In some cases, material will need to be offered in both electronic and printed form. Other cases may require that only printed or electronic versions be offered. Where there is a statutory requirement to provide printed material, the governing body can be asked to agree to its replacement by electronic alternatives. Thus, a statutory requirement need not in itself be a hindrance to the transition to electronic media. What is more important is the current capability and preference of the target audience with regard to accessing information.

2. Aim of information dissemination policy

2.1 The aim of information dissemination policy is to facilitate the dissemination of an appropriate selection of material, by conventional or electronic means, based on the needs of the organization's target audience. It must be borne in mind that printed publications will continue to exist. However, in many cases, electronic versions are an attractive alternative to what have traditionally been printed documents. There will be a changing mix of electronic and printed matter during the forthcoming decades.

3. Information clients

3.1 In today's environment, information clients can be expected to include: officials of [member/contracting] States; the organization's governing [body/bodies]; staff of [missions/delegations]; other international organizations, including field projects related to technical cooperation; non-governmental organizations; the press and other media; academic institutions and libraries; business and industry, including financial institutions; independent institutions, including regional bodies; self-employed professionals, such as freelance translators; and the general public.

3.2 All of the above are among the organization's clients, with the exception of [list exceptions here or delete the last phrase in this sentence].

4. Classification of information

4.1 Information, regardless of the form in which it is stored (on paper and/or electronic media) or how it is disseminated, can be categorized as follows:

(a) PUBLIC, i.e., information that is available to all information clients with open access to encourage use;

(b) LIMITED but unsecured, i.e., information that is normally not of a sensitive nature but is of primary interest to a select number of individuals;

(c) RESTRICTED with secured access, i.e., information that is sensitive but nevertheless needs to be disseminated to authorized recipients.

4.2 A fourth category of information, CONFIDENTIAL, is not within the purview of this policy statement.

5. Responsibilities of information providers

5.1 Information providers within the organization can be characterized in different ways. Some are the authors of information. Others collect information, generally from [member/contracting] States, and publish it in an enhanced form. Still others compile and edit information from various sources.

5.2 The primary responsibility for making material available electronically lies with these information providers. In performing this function, they should conform with recommended (best) practices issued by the organization.

6. Editorial quality control

6.1 There are a number of advantages introduced by the editing of information for publication:

(a) Ensuring the accuracy of presentation of texts;

(b) Providing a consistent style and organizational image;

(c) Introducing language correction, particularly when authors are not writing in their native tongue;

(d) Raising the quality of contributions from compilers who have limited experience in presenting the results of their work in an accepted format;

(e) Maintaining international acceptability by, for example, avoiding discriminatory or offensive content;

(f) Ensuring that texts are understandable by readers whose first language is not the language of publication;

(g) Ensuring that texts are written, where warranted, at a level of complexity suited to those who are not specialists in the particular subject;

(h) Checking that publications effectively convey the message intended.

6.2 The above advantages apply equally to both traditional and electronic publications. Except in life-threatening emergencies, care should be taken not to bypass the editorial function in the endeavour to disseminate information rapidly.

7. Questions of intellectual property

7.1 In the sphere of information, issues related to intellectual property are of paramount importance.

7.2 The organization retains the copyright to all its published material. Specifically, the organization also retains the copyright to all information made available electronically, whether or not printed versions also exist.

7.3 Material should only be published by or at the request of the authorizing/originating office, i.e., the information provider.

7.4 Care should be taken not to duplicate extensively information that is already available in the same medium. In the case of electronic material, the use of hyperlinks makes duplication unnecessary.

7.5 If information becomes obsolete in the sense that it is no longer current or useful, it must be promptly removed from the production chain but should always be preserved in the archives of the organization.

7.6 Informal and unofficial material should not normally be published on-line; if it is, its unofficial status should be clearly indicated.

8. Confidential information

8.1 The policies set out in this statement do not apply to information that the organization deems to be confidential and/or relevant solely to the internal administration of the secretariat.

II. WORLD WIDE WEB PUBLISHING

1. Use of the World Wide Web

1.1 Internet users will increasingly expect the organization to provide information on the World Wide Web and other modern networking technologies as they appear. While electronic editions of certain material will become available, printed publications will continue to exist in line with demand. In addition, CD-ROM-based products have a client base that may not have or desire access to the Web.

1.2 The organization intends to make electronic material available on the Web to take advantage of the low-cost opportunities now open to it through the use of this Internet service, particularly in an international environment in which conventional distribution expenses are substantial. Until alternative technologies appear that warrant a change of approach, the Web will be the primary but not sole means by which a large volume of information will be made available on demand and on-line.

2. Web publishing

2.1 Many departments and offices in organizations of the United Nations system have started the process of Web publishing.

2.2 Staff involved in this activity need to be aware of the necessity, as with printed material, to maintain a high quality with regard to completeness and authenticity; consistency with and relevance to the approved work programme of the organization; timeliness, which should improve; coherence; clarity of presentation; and readability. In addition, staff must bear in mind ease of use by the organization's information clients and the need to select alternative media in cases in which Web dissemination is not the most appropriate choice.

2.3 With respect to Web publishing, a commitment must be made by a responsible manager who should be:

(a) Familiar with the technical capabilities of the Web;

(b) Responsive to user requirements and priorities for access in a prompt and efficient manner;

(c) Able to arrange training to enable staff to make the transition to the electronic environment.

However, primary responsibility for making documents available electronically will lie with information providers, working in conformity with recommended (best) practices.

2.4 Among best practices, the following are expected to be of initial importance:

(a) Avoiding trivial material by publishing only information with substance;

(b) Ensuring consistency with the (printed) publications strategy and practice of the organization.

2.5 Accordingly, [name of the office/division responsible within the secretariat] will be responsible for issuing specific instructions and promulgating recommended (best) practices in order to avoid confusion as the organization moves to an increasingly electronic environment, in particular by making information available on the Web. [Name of staff member and/or title of post] has been assigned to [supervise/coordinate] this undertaking on a [full-time/part-time] basis. [His/her] role will include actively seeking the

concurrence of originators so that accurate and timely material can be accessed and disseminated electronically via the Web.

2.6 In addition, [title of post] will be responsible for editing electronic material to ensure consistency with the organization's objectives and house style. The design of documents for the Web includes linkages to other documents, and thus differs from the design of conventional printed text. Such inherent design differences need to be taken into account and exploited to their best advantage.

3. Location of Web site

3.1 As is the case for the United Nations system in general, there are three options for the physical location of the organization's Web site. The computer facilities on its own premises or at other United Nations organizations can be used. The International Computing Centre is also available to house Web sites for any United Nations agency. Finally, today's market place has given rise to a number of commercial centres.

3.2 It has been determined that the organization's Web site will be located at [enter details of the agency's choice of location].

3.3 As a result of the new technical features offered by the Web, the organization will also serve as a gateway to all other United Nations agencies by including a prominent reference to the official Web site locator for the United Nations system (http://www.unsystem.org) on its own home page (main universal resource locator).

4. Web-related issues

4.1 Where authoritative on-line information exists in another agency and that agency has ensured its accuracy, the organization will not duplicate such information but will provide on-line access through hyperlinks for clients.

4.2 It is recognized that for various reasons, many individuals in developing States will not have access to the necessary technical infrastructure to use the electronic network. However, agencies responsible for technical cooperation in sustainable development [including the organization] are approaching this challenge. The situation is expected to improve progressively through such efforts as the Global Information Infrastructure initiative.

4.3 Whereas the active dissemination of printed material has required targeted mailings to individuals or institutions, dissemination through the Web will take the form of an on-line response to user queries. Where appropriate, a system will be installed to sign documents digitally so that users can verify their source and authenticity. Administrative procedures will be established, where needed, for affixing digital signatures.

4.4 The organization will initially give priority to making electronic information publicly available free of charge but will also reserve the right to provide information products for a fee via the Web.

4.5 The Web site will include an agreed copyright statement displayed prominently on all material in order to protect the organization's interests. In appropriate cases, the organization may grant permission for certain uses to specific clients or classes of clients, for example, to permit the reproduction of copyrighted material for educational purposes on a non-commercial basis or to enable on-line information to be displayed for private viewing.

5. Timing of Web implementation

5.1 It is expected that at least [enter number] years will be needed for substantially all existing material for which there is an electronic demand to be available via the Web. Once that point is reached, the continuing requirement will be to add fresh material and weed material no longer of use.

5.2 Initially, one priority in the use of the Web will be to publish dynamic (constantly changing) information that needs to be made available rapidly.

Notes

[a] Developed by the ISCC Task Force on Information Access and Dissemination for endorsement by ACC (to be adapted and adopted by ISCC member agencies).

[b] Adapted from those listed in a paper entitled "Maintaining editorial quality control in an electronic environment" (IAMLADP/1996/R.4), submitted by the International Atomic Energy Agency at the Inter-Agency Meeting on Language Arrangements, Documentation and Publications, Geneva, 24-27 June 1996.

Annex IV

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

(Part II, Geneva, 14 April 1997)

Chairperson: L. SCHAUDINN (UNESCO)

Secretary: C. HACKETT (United Nations)

United Nations entities and programmes

United Nations	
Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development	S. Khan
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development	M. Plehn-Majia
United Nations Children's Fund	A. Vaher
United Nations Development Programme	G. Gabriel N. Chandavakar
United Nations Population Fund	M. Simonen
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	S. Berglund
United Nations International Drug Control Programme	G. Day
World Food Programme	W. H. Schleiffer

Specialized agencies, IAEA and WTO

International Labour Organization	G. Minet
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations	W. Mann
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization	L. Schaudinn
International Civil Aviation Organization	G. Griffiths
World Health Organization	Maaza Bekele
World Bank	A. Sfeir-Younis

Universal Postal Union	G. Kalicki
International Telecommunication Union	K. Boussaïd
World Meteorological Organization	T. Sutherland
International Maritime Organization	F. Labastida
United Nations Industrial Development Organization	G. Papuli

* * *

Consultative Committee on Administrative Questions (Financial and Budgetary Questions)	P. Leslie
Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions	D. Deane

---